Joseph Trapp, D.D.

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SERMONS

ON

MORAL and PRACTICAL

SUBJECTS.

By the late Rev. JOSEPH TRAPP, *D. D.*
Rector of Harlington *in* Middlesex, *and Vicar of the United Parishes of* Christ-Church *and* St. Leonard's, Foster-Lane, London.

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SERMON I.

The Moral Goodneſs and Evil of Human Actions.

1 Sam. II. 3.

—And by him Actions are weighed.

The Context runs thus:

For the Lord is a God of Knowledge; and by him Actions are weighed.

SERM. I.

IT is a Part of *Hannah*'s Thankſgiving to God, upon an Occaſion well known, and not neceſſary to be here taken notice of: And as little ſhall I think it neceſſary to take notice of the various Interpretations of that Word in the Original Language, which our Tranſlators have thought fit (and very juſtly, for ought appears to the contrary) to render by *weighed*. The Senſe of the whole Clauſe I take thus:

SERM. I. "God paſſes an *Eſtimate* or *Judgment* upon "the *Actions* of Men, concerning the *moral* "*Goodneſs or Evil* of them." To this Obſervation I ſhall confine myſelf, without making any farther Uſe of the *Context*, or treating upon the great Attribute, the *Divine Omniſcience:* Adding moreover this further Obſervation, as immediately reſulting from the other, "That ſince *God* ſo weighs "our Actions, we ought to weigh them *Our-* "*ſelves*; and that too in the only juſt Balance, "true, right, unprejudiced *Reaſon*, aſſiſted "by true uncorrupted *Religion*." The Subject therefore of my enſuing Diſcourſe ſhall be the *moral Goodneſs and Evil of human Actions:* And how important a Subject it is, I need not inform you; and how neceſſary to be diſcourſed upon in theſe Times, when ſo many falſe and dangerous Doctrines are propagated concerning *Lawful* and *Unlawful*, *Duty* and *Sin*.

YET perhaps in the Opinion of Some I may have Reaſon to retract thoſe laſt Words, or at leaſt to explain them. If the *Subject* be important, it may be ſaid, What Occaſion is there, however, for any *Diſcourſe* of *ours* upon it? Are not the *Scriptures* ſufficient

cient to ſtate this great Point, the Nature of Virtue and Vice, and to ſet out the Boundaries of each? I anſwer, *1ſt*, Be it ſo; yet the Scriptures may be deſcanted and enlarged upon, and in many Places require Explanation. But beſides; *2dly*, It is impoſſible for *them* to ſpecify all Particulars: And the Folly of thoſe who teach us that we muſt do nothing, but what we have *plain, direct Warrant* for in *Scripture*, has been ſufficiently laid open; eſpecially by the moſt learned and judicious Mr. *Hooker*, in the Second Book of his *Eccleſiaſtical Polity*. And as this is impoſſible, ſo it would have been unneceſſary; ſince the ſame *God* who gave us *Scripture*, gave us *Reaſon*: Reaſon is *his* Gift, as well as Revelation; and they are Both to be made uſe of by us. If the Word of God in many Caſes be not expreſs, as indeed it is not, yet we have natural Reaſon, Conſcience, and Spiritual Guides, to aſſiſt us. Theſe the Scriptures are ſo far from ſuperſeding, that they ſuppoſe them. Are then the Scriptures *defective*, and their Defects to be ſupplied by *Us*? No; they are abſolutely perfect, and nothing is wanting to them. But we muſt conſider that a

SERM. I.

SERM. I. Thing is then *perfect*, when it wants no *Part*, or *Circumſtance*, which by the *Nature*, *End*, and *Deſign* of that Thing it *ought* to have; and to denominate it perfect, this is ſufficient. Now by the Nature of Things (as was before hinted) no Syſtem of Laws, though made by God himſelf, can poſſibly ſpecify all Particulars. The Scriptures come as near it as any Laws can. There are Precepts and Directions for our Behaviour in our ſeveral Relations: We are taught our Duty, as we are *Creatures*, as we are *Men*, as we are *Fathers*, as we are *Children*, as we are *Maſters*, as we are *Servants*, as we are *Governors*, as we are *Subjects*; and in all other general Reſpects, which are too numerous to be here mentioned. We have likewiſe Directions for our ſeveral *Stations*, *Capacities*, *Conditions*, *Ages*, and for both *Sexes*; nay, for ſome more remarkable *Times* and *Places*. To give Rules for the infinite Variety of Circumſtances, with which every individual Perſon's Actions may be inveſted, is a Thing altogether impracticable: Not that it is impoſſible for God to do it, ſince it implies no Contradiction, and his unlimited Knowledge comprehends all Things,

Things, paſt, preſent, and to come: But with reſpect to *Us*, the Nature of ſuch a Syſtem as we are ſpeaking of will not permit it: It would be endleſs to provide for all Circumſtances; it would ſwell the Sacred Volumes to an immenſe Number and Bulk; and, with a leſs Hyperbole than that of St. *John*, *the World itſelf would not contain the Books that ſhould be written.* Beſides, it would be of no Uſe to Mankind, nor at all aſſiſt them in the Practice of their Duty; ſince they would never be able to read over, much leſs to remember, the hundredth Part of ſuch a Collection; which would only puzzle and confound, but never ſatisfy or inſtruct them. It is enough, therefore, that the Laws of *Chriſt* are as ſpecial as any Laws of that Kind can be, or need be: And if they do not reach to all the minuteſt Circumſtances which may occur in human Life, yet we have the above-mention'd Directions, and Guides, given us by the ſame God, to come in Aid to them. All Laws, Diſciplines, and Inſtitutions, whether Divine or Human, as well as all Arts and Sciences, muſt *preſuppoſe* ſomething; and not prove, explain, or include

SERM. I.

SERM. I. clude *every thing:* The Scriptures preſuppoſe natural Reaſon, and common Conſcience, which were indeed antecedent to them. Nor does this Doctrine of ours make our Duty ſo intricate, perplex'd, and puzzling a Taſk as it may be imagined. If the *general Principles*, the *ſincere Love of God*, a *due Regard to his Authority*, and a *hearty Deſire* to perform our *Duty in all its Parts*, do but prevail and rule in our Minds, they will make all *eaſy in the main*; though ſome particular Caſes will ſtill be attended with particular Difficulties; which however are ſtill to be removed by the Means aforeſaid, which God has abundantly afforded us.

To proceed therefore.

WHEN we ſpeak of *Actions* in the Senſe of my Text, and as I now propoſe to conſider them, we always mean *human Actions*, ſtrictly and properly ſo called; or the Actions of Men, *as they are Men*, i. e. not *mere* Animals, but *rational* ones: And under this View they are conſidered as *Good*, *Evil*, or *Indifferent*. As to the *laſt*, I know it is denied by Some, that any human Actions, properly and ſtrictly ſuch, are, or can

can be, *indifferent*. Not to enter into the *Subtilties* of this Controverſy, I only obſerve thus much, which is ſufficient for our *Practice*. Be it admitted, that whatever we do, with any *Deliberation*, though never ſo little, either is agreeable to the general End which we ought to propoſe in all our Actions, or it is not: Still in a thouſand Actions, the Deliberation is, and ought to be, ſo very little, as to be next to no Deliberation at all; and their Agreeableneſs, or Diſagreeableneſs, to the general End ſo very inconſiderable, that, however it may be in *Speculation*, in Point of *Practice* it is not *worth taking notice of*. Thoſe Actions therefore may, at leaſt in a popular and leſs philoſophical Signification, be called *indifferent*, to diſtinguiſh them from thoſe which are plainly, and undoubtedly, *good* or *evil*. Or we may put it thus: If ſuch an inconſiderable Action muſt be called either morally good, or morally evil; to prevent the Trouble which this Theory may occaſion to well-diſpoſed, but ſcrupulous Minds, we ſay it is morally good. Evil it cannot be; ſince the *Thing done*, abſtracting from the *Agent*, has in its own Nature no Harm in it:

SERM. I.

SERM. I. it: And as to the Agent, he does it with a *good Deſign*, at leaſt with an *innocent* one, ſo far as he has *any Deſign* at all, and therefore need not any farther concern himſelf about it. *Such* a Deſign I ſuppoſe; for if it be done with an *evil* Deſign, no doubt the Action is evil. Nay, to take away the very Foundation of their Doctrine, we may well affirm that their main Principle, *viz.* "Such an Action either is, or is not, agree-"able to the general End, *&c.*" is *vain* and *idle*, and as to the *Uſe*, or *Application* which they make of it, *falſe:* Becauſe there is in this Caſe no Occaſion why the Perſon ſhould have *any View* to that End, or the Action have any Reference towards it. For is it neceſſary that in every trifling Thing which we do, we ſhould *actually deſign* and *intend* the Glory of God, and the Salvation of our Souls? Some indeed tell us, *it is:* But I ſhall ſoon *ſhew* the Unſoundneſs and Falſhood of that Aſſertion. At preſent I *ſuppoſe* it to be falſe; and upon that Suppoſition, put this Caſe by way of Illuſtration. Imagine a Man to be *purchaſing a Piece of Land*, or the like; and his Friend to argue with him thus: Either your purchaſing this

this Land is *conſiſtent with your Health*, or it is not: Would not this Reaſoning be moſt impertinent? It *is* indeed very conſiſtent with his Health; but the Perſon at this Time neither has, nor has Occaſion to have, *any Thought* about *that*: 'Tis *ſomething elſe*, at preſent, about which his Thoughts are employ'd. But I am inſenſibly, and unawares, breaking my Promiſe, which was not to trouble you with theſe Niceties; yet I hope I ſhall be the more eaſily excuſed, becauſe my Deſign is to perſuade you *not* to be troubled with Niceties, and to ſhew you the Folly and Falſhood of the Doctrine juſt now glanced at, That we ought *actually* and *directly* to *intend* and *deſign* the *Glory of God*, in *every thing* we do, though never ſo minute, trifling, and inconſiderable.

SERM. I.

THIS is of a piece with the abovementioned abſurd Poſition, That we muſt do nothing without an expreſs Warrant from Scripture. That has been already conſidered, and this is altogether as ridiculous. It is contrary to the firſt Principles of Common Senſe, and therefore cannot be true. This is ſo plain, that it is difficult to prove it;

SERM. I. it; becauſe ſcarce any thing can be plainer than itſelf. We muſt not, ſay they, ſo much as take up a *Ruſh*, or a *Straw*, (they are their own Words) unleſs we have Scripture for it, and unleſs we intend it for the Glory of God. Now is not this ſufficiently *confuted*, by being barely *mention'd?* Beſides, it is impoſſible that the Mind of Man ſhould be always thus *actually attentive* to *one* Thing; *impoſſible*, and therefore *not required:* And that not only in ſuch *mere Trifles*, and *Nothings*, as theſe, but alſo in *Matters* of a much *higher*, and ſome of a *moral* Nature. Nay farther; there are *ſome Actions* which, by reaſon of the Weakneſs of our Nature, it would be *Profaneneſs* to intend for the *Glory of God*, or in any Senſe refer or direct towards him. Again: What is here pretended is not *neceſſary*, becauſe ſomething *ſhort of it* is *ſufficient:* Which is, to make God's Glory, and the Salvation of our Souls, the *main controuling Principle* of our Actions in *general*, and of *ſome* more eſpecially *in particular:* In *them*, though not in *all*, *actually* to *intend* and *deſign* Both; and in *none* to do *any thing contrary* to Either: Which nothing can be, which is in itſelf

morally

morally indifferent, or *naturally neceſſary*. But they will aſk, How does it appear that this is ſufficient? I anſwer, as before; becauſe what goes beyond it, which they inſiſt upon, viz. *actually intending* God's Glory, &c. in every thing we do, is impoſſible: And that it is, appears from Experience, from the Workings of our own Minds, and the Narrowneſs and Imperfection of our mortal State. But all this, they will object, is *carnal Reaſoning*, and Scripture is directly againſt us. St. *Paul* ſays, *Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatſoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.** I anſwer, 1*ſt*, The Apoſtle ſpeaks not *in general*, but of a *particular Caſe*; not of *ordinary* Eating and Drinking, but of eating and drinking *ſuch Things* as were *offered to Idols:* And ſo *whatever you do* muſt be underſtood only concerning Things of *that Kind* of which he is *there* ſpeaking; in order to avoid *Scandal*, or drawing others into Sin. 2*dly*, For the ſame Reaſon it appears, that by doing *every thing for* the Glory of God, he means *doing nothing* which may be *inconſiſtent* with the Glory of God, or tend to the Deſtruction

SERM. I.

* 1 Cor. x. 31.

SERM. I. ſtruction of Souls: Which we all readily agree to, 3*dly*, Suppoſing him to ſpeak in the moſt general Terms, and that too poſitively, not negatively, (though the Contrary is very plain, yet) even then his Purpoſe is fully anſwer'd, his Precept fully complied with, if (as I have already ſaid, for it is of ſuch Moment that I beg Leave to repeat it) we make the Glory of God the *main controuling Principle* of our Actions *in general*, and of *ſome* more eſpecially *in particular*; in *them*, though not in *all*, *actually intending* and *deſigning* it, and in *none* doing any thing *contrary* to it.* The ſame Apoſtle, in the next Verſe but one, ſays, *Even as I pleaſe all Men in all things, not ſeeking mine own Profit, but the Profit of many, that they may be ſaved.* But can we therefore imagine that he never lay down or

* *Eò omnia referte, ſi non actu, ſaltem aptitudine, habitu, ſive intentione habituali, vel virtuali*, ſays *Eraſmus* upon the Place. Thither refer all, if not actually, yet at leaſt habitually; with a virtual, habitual Intention. And *Grotius: Cavete nè ullo veſtro facto* ἐκ περιστάσεως *Dei honor lædatur*. Beware leſt there be any Circumſtance in any of your Actions, by which the Honour of God may be hurt or prejudiced. *Ità facite*, (ſays another learned Expoſitor) *ut nullam occaſionem detis vituperandi Dei, aut ſcandalizandi alium*. Let your Actions be ſuch, that they may give no Occaſion to the diſhonouring of God, or the ſcandalizing of your Neighbour.

or roſe, ſat or walk'd, eat or drank, with- SERM.
out *actually intending* and *deſigning* the *Sal-* I.
vation of others? Do thoſe who teach us this ſtrange Doctrine practiſe it themſelves? Nay, do they not know it, and find it to be impracticable?

LET us carefully guard therefore againſt the *Diſeaſe* of *Scrupuloſity*, and all unneceſſary Perplexities, which either the falſe Principles which I have been examining, or any thing elſe, may occaſion to us. I ſay, any thing elſe; particularly the Queſtion concerning *Lawful* and *Unlawful*. With relation to a Multitude of Actions, ſuch as thoſe, for Example, which I have juſt now taken notice of, it is not worth while ſo much as to *put that Queſtion:* And even as to others, I mean ſuch as are really conſiderable, we ought not to put it *too nicely*. Some Things are ſo light and trifling, that it is not worth while ſo much as to *lay them in this Balance*; nay, it is imprudent and dangerous to do ſo: And even others, thoſe which are conſiderable, ſhould not be weigh'd by *Grains and Scruples*; nay, it is by the Nature of them impoſſible that they ſhould. But how ſhall we know *which*

Actions

SERM. I. *Actions* are *conſiderable enough* to be *weigh'd*, as to Lawful and Unlawful, and which are *not?* May we not be miſtaken in this? And ſo will not the Difficulty recur? I anſwer again, as I did in the Beginning: God gave us common Reaſon and Senſe: That is ſufficient in this Caſe; and if we will not make uſe of it, who is to blame? Would a Man, propoſing to take the Air for his Diverſion, make a Doubt whether it were *lawful*, or no? Or, if he did it, whether it were his *Duty* to walk, or ride? Then concerning thoſe *Actions* which we are ſatisfied *are conſiderable enough* to be *weighed*, whereas it was ſaid that we ought not to balance even *them* by *Grains* and *Scruples*; it may be aſk'd, What do we mean by Grains and Scruples, the Expreſſion in *Morality* being certainly *metaphorical*, not *literal*; and how ſhall we know *when* we have examined *ſufficiently?* Here again the Reſolution of the Queſtion is juſt the ſame: Either our own Reaſon alone (for Scripture is ſuppoſed to be ſilent) or the Reaſon and Authority of our Spiritual Guides added to it, muſt determine us: For there are no certain particular Rules for theſe Matters; no *fix'd Point*,

or

or *Geometrical Line*, in *Morality*. All this will be more fully diſcuſſed and explained in the Sequel: At preſent I proceed. SERM. I.

IT is to be obſerved, that *Actions*, in a wide and moral Senſe, include *Words*, and even *Thoughts*; they being capable of Regulation, and of being virtuous, or vicious. Farther: Under *Acting* is here included *Not acting*; becauſe an *Omiſſion* may be virtuous, or vicious, as well as a *poſitive Action*. The Diſtinction of Duties and Sins into thoſe which relate to *God*, our *Neighbour*, and *Ourſelves*, as alſo of Sins into thoſe of the *World*, the *Fleſh*, and the *Devil*, is well known, and we need ſay no more of it. Having therefore thus endeavoured to clear the Way, and remove the Rubbiſh, by making theſe preliminary Obſervations, and rejecting ſome popular Errors, which have a very extenſive Influence upon this whole Subject; I come now more cloſely to conſider the great Point in hand, viz. *The moral Goodneſs and Evil of human Actions* in general; and ſuch ſpecial Points, Caſes, Rules, and Directions, as ſhall ſeem moſt material, in particular.

Now

SERM. I.

Now foraſmuch as we cannot *meaſure* without a *Rule*, nor *weigh* without a *Balance*; I obſerve, that the preciſe Nature of *moral* Goodneſs or Evil is the Keeping or Violation of a *Law*. Law is the *Standard* by which our Actions are to be *meaſured*, the *Balance* in which they are to be *weigh'd*. By a Law in general is meant a *Rule* for the Actions of rational Beings, preſcribed by one who has *publick Authority* over them; duly *promulged*, or made known; enforced (for the moſt part) with the *Sanction* of *Puniſhment* upon the Breach, and *ſometimes* of *Reward* upon the Obſervation of it. This differs from a *mere* Rule, becauſe though every Law be a Rule, yet every Rule is not a Law. A thouſand Things may be, and continually are, *adviſed* or *preſcribed to* us, which yet have no *Obligation upon* us. We may be *guided*, or *directed*, by our *Equals*, nay *Inferiors*, but not *commanded:* And we may either follow, or not follow, their Directions, without Virtue or Sin, without being either rewarded or puniſhed. They may in *Kindneſs* give us *Rules*, but have no *Right* or *Authority* to give us *Laws*. Nor can *all* Superiors give

Laws

Laws to their Inferiors: For all *Commands* are not *Laws*. A Maſter may command his Servant, or a Parent his Child, and the latter is obliged to *obey* the former: But that Obligation ariſes not directly from ſuch Commands, but from ſome Law properly ſo called, requiring ſuch Obedience. So that *All*, who have even *Authority* over others, have not a Right of *Legiſlature* over them: Neither, in the next Place, does even the *Right* of *Puniſhing* (and much leſs the *Power* of *Rewarding*) neceſſarily ſuppoſe it. A Father may puniſh his Son, but he is not therefore a Legiſlator to him. But *publick* Authority only can make Laws; publick *Governors* over their *Subjects*. It is neceſſary that Laws ſhould be duly *promulged*, or notified: Becauſe it is impoſſible for any one to *obey* what he does not *know*; and nobody is *obliged* to *Impoſſibilities*. The annexing of *Puniſhments*, or *Rewards*, or both, is not ſo properly *eſſential* to them (and therefore muſt not be ſtrictly deem'd a Part of their *Definition*) as neceſſary, or at leaſt highly requiſite to *guard* them, and *enforce Obedience* to them: For the *Law* is certainly one Thing, and the *Sanction* another.

SERM. I.

SERM. I.

other. Now Laws are of *ſeveral Kinds*. The moſt general Diviſion of them is into *Divine* and *Human*; the firſt made by *God*, the laſt by *Men*. The Law of God is two-fold, *Natural* and *Revealed:* I ſtate it ſo, becauſe what is commonly, and, conſidering its Univerſality, very properly called the Law of *Nature*, is certainly the Law of *God* too: Becauſe it is He who implanted it in our Souls; and its eternal Equity and Reaſon depend upon Him, who is the eternal Source and Fountain of both. Nay, perhaps the Law *Natural* and *Revealed* may not be ſo ſtrictly diſtinguiſhed, but that even the *former* may one way, and in ſome meaſure, be *reveal'd* likewiſe. There might be, and very probably were, Revelations made to the *Firſt Man*, which are not recorded in Scripture, and were by Tradition deliver'd down to his Poſterity. And yet this is ſufficiently differenced from the other, becauſe That is *committed to Writing*, which This is not. What *Human Laws* are, I need not explain: Every body knows it. Here, however, our Subject requires us to obſerve, that Obedience even to *them* is, in a moral

and

and religious Senſe, Obedience to the Law of God; always provided that Thoſe be not contrary to This: For if they be, (but then we muſt be very ſure that they are) we know the Rule of the Apoſtles, We muſt *obey God, rather than Men.** Otherwiſe, I ſay, We are to obey even Them, *not only for Wrath, i. e.* for fear of temporal Puniſhments inflicted by them, but in the ſtricteſt Senſe, for *Conſcience-ſake* †: Becauſe, in all Things lawful, with regard to his own Authority God has commanded us to obey theirs: And we cannot be contumacious or refractory to the Prince who governs us, without being ſo likewiſe to the God who made us. But then here let *Legiſlators* themſelves conſider, that no Actions are more weigh'd by God, than *theirs* are. If they make unjuſt Laws, (for that they may do, there being a Legiſlator ſuperior to them, and the eternal Maxims of Reaſon, Truth, and Equity binding them in their *publick Capacity*, as well as them and all others in their *private*, nay, if there be any Difference, even *more:)* I ſay, if they do ſo, great is their Guilt, and heavy will

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* Acts v. 29. † Rom. xiii. 5.

SERM. I. will be their Condemnation. Not but that here too the Subject is obliged to Obedience, provided the Law be unjuſt only on the Part of the Maker or Makers, not on the Part of them for whom it is made: For it may be unjuſt in the One to impoſe it, and yet lawful in the Other to ſubmit to and obey it. And if it be lawful, 'tis neceſſary; becauſe, as I ſaid, we are commanded by God to obey our Governors in all Things which by him are not forbidden. That Maxim, *Equity is eſſential to a Law*, had need be well explained, before we can acknowledge it to be true. If they mean Equity on the Part of the *Legiſlators*, it is eſſential indeed to a *good* Law, and *ought* to be in *all*; but ſtill there may be a Law, ſtrictly and properly ſo called, without it; and obligatory too (as we have ſeen) upon the Conſciences of the Subjects. If it be meant that the Law is *null* and *void*, whenever the *Matter* of it is in itſelf *ſinful*; it is true indeed, but very crudely and looſely expreſs'd. In this Caſe, no doubt, the Subject is ſo far from being obliged to obey, that he is obliged *not* to obey. If it be enquired, how the *Law*

of

of Nature is *promulged*; we anſwer, It is written in every Man's Breaſt, and agreed to by the univerſal Conſent of all Mankind. Who that has even the leaſt Knowledge, (and, excepting the Caſe of Ideots, if he has not, it is his own Fault) can be ignorant that *Charity*, *Juſtice*, the *Worſhip of God*, and the like, are abſolutely good, and *Theft*, *Murder*, all Sorts of *Injuſtice* and *Violence*, *Impiety* and *Blaſphemy*, are abſolutely evil? SERM. I.

FROM what has been diſcourſed upon the Nature of *Laws* it may be collected, that when that Word is applied to *God*, and alſo when it is applied to *irrational* or *inanimate* Things, it is uſed in a leſs accurate and proper Senſe, not for a *Law* in *Strictneſs* of Speech, but for a *Rule*, *Meaſure*, or *Standard*. God is *above* being ſubject to Laws, and irrational Creatures *below* it. Therefore, when that Word is applied to *Him*, it means no more than the Rule which in his infinite Wiſdom he has ſet himſelf to act by; when to *Them*, it means the *Order of Nature*, by which, according to the Divine Appointment, they act, and are acted upon. Rational Creatures there-

SERM. I. fore, *viz.* Angels and Men, are the only Subjects of Laws; and that *becauſe* they are *rational* on the one hand, and *Creatures*, i. e. *imperfect Beings*, on the other. By reaſon of the firſt they are *capable of being* regulated, by reaſon of the laſt they *want to be* regulated. By *Rewards* and *Puniſhments*, the Sanctions annex'd to Laws, are ordinarily and moſt properly meant ſuch as are *conferred* or *inflicted* on the Subject, by the direct *Act* of the *Governor*, (though here it muſt be remark'd as to *human* Laws, that Men are only *puniſhed* for breaking them, not *rewarded* for keeping them) not but that there are others, *adhering to*, or *ariſing from*, the Nature of the Things themſelves; Virtue being *in a great meaſure* its *own Reward*, and Vice *in a great meaſure* its *own Puniſhment*, as we daily find by Experience.

THE real *Being* of *Moral Good* and *Evil*, upon a Suppoſal of which all moral Laws proceed, can be denied by none but the moſt abandoned of Scepticks, and the moſt unreaſonable of Men. That *Pleaſure* is eternally and abſolutely *Good*, and *Pain* eternally and abſolutely *Evil*, will, it is hoped,

hoped, be granted by every body: And that *Virtue* even in itſelf, or in its own Nature, cauſes Pleaſure, and *Vice* Pain, we find by Experience; as I juſt now obſerved. This we not only *know*, but *feel*; and are as ſure of it, as we are of our *bodily Senſations*. All rational Beings agree in it, and therefore it muſt be true: Elſe we cannot be ſure that there is Truth in any thing. If what All agree in may be falſe, we can be ſure of nothing; we may be miſtaken even in thinking that we ourſelves really are in Being. Beſides: Since all *Men* agree in the Truth of which I am ſpeaking, (as we find they do) *God* muſt agree in it; and if He does, we may be ſure the Angels do: But, however, I ſay *all Men's* aſſenting to it proves that *God* does. Whatever Sentiment is Univerſal muſt be Natural, and, if Natural, muſt come from the Author of Nature. If God has impreſs'd ſuch and ſuch Notions upon our Minds, or (which amounts to the ſame) has given us a Faculty by which we naturally judge this or that, he muſt judge the ſame himſelf: Otherwiſe he would be the Author of Falſhood, which is impoſſible. And what

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SERM. I. he judges to be true muſt be true; otherwiſe infinite Wiſdom would err, which is equally impoſſible. It will be alledged perhaps, that I have taken one Thing for granted, which ought to have been proved, *viz.* That there *is* ſuch an *univerſal Conſent* among all Men, in the general Maxims or firſt Principles of Morality, *viz.* That there *is a God*, and that he *ought to be worſhipped*; that *mutual Kindneſs* is good, and *Rapine* and *Murder* evil, *&c.* ſince there are People in the World ſo barbarous and ſavage, as to be utterly ignorant of them. But, in the *firſt* Place, How does this appear? They may have Notions of Religion and Morality, and yet not explain themſelves ſo as to make them intelligible to our *European* Travellers into thoſe Countries, who are ignorant of their Language and Caſtoms, and do not ſtay long enough among them, or converſe enough with them, to be able poſitively to determine upon this Matter. But, 2*dly*, Suppoſing the Fact were true, according to their own Account theſe People are *mere Savages* in *every thing elſe*; conſequently are *not* to be *regarded as Men*, in any thing but their

their Shape; and conſequently are no Exception from the general Conſent of Mankind. To ſay ſome do not *underſtand* theſe Things, is of no Force. The moſt unconteſtable Propoſition in Mathematicks is not underſtood by thoſe who are not capable of underſtanding it; but it does not therefore follow, that the Propoſition is not univerſally aſſented to. 'Tis enough that it is underſtood and agreed to by all who hear it, and underſtand the Terms of it, and is denied by nobody. But it will be ſaid the Propoſition we are now upon, relating to *moral Good and Evil*, is denied by ſome, *viz.* the very Objectors with whom we are now ſuppoſed to be arguing. I anſwer: Thoſe who deny it (if ſuch there be) do not *believe* what they themſelves *ſay*; they *know* the contrary, and are not in a *Miſtake*, but in a *Lye*: And for this I appeal to all rational, unprejudiced Perſons. He who ſays that Charity is not lovely, and Murder deteſtable, *i. e.* denies the *real Exiſtence* of *moral Good* and *Evil*, the *intrinſic Goodneſs* of ſome Actions, and the *intrinſic Evil* of others, both of them *eternal* and *invariable*, may as well deny the Being of any

SERM. I. any Truth or Falſhood, of the Difference between them, or of any Certainty whatſoever; may as well inſiſt upon it, that the Whole is not greater than a Part, or that a Thing may be, and not be, at the ſame Time.

THUS I have proved the *Being* of *moral Good* and *Evil*, and at the ſame Time of the *Law of Nature*. Had Man never *fallen*, that Law, together with the poſitive one concerning the forbidden Fruit, would perhaps have been *ſufficient*. But ſince by *original Sin* we are grievouſly corrupted, *other Laws* are neceſſary to reinforce *that*, and add to it. If it be aſk'd, Whether the Being of moral Good and Evil *ſuppoſe* a Law, or be *antecedent* to all Laws; I anſwer, It muſt *ſuppoſe* the *eternal Law of Reaſon*, which is in the eternal Mind of *God*; but it is *previous* to all *other* Laws, they being *founded upon* it, and intended to make us act in *Conformity to* it.

SERMON

SERMON II.

The Moral Goodneſs and Evil of Human Actions.

The *Second* Sermon on this Subject.

1 SAM. II. 3.

---And by him Actions are weighed.

HAVING thus *ſettled the Balance,* I proceed now *more particularly* (for it has *in part* been done *already)* to the *Weighing of our Actions* in it. Whatſoever is agreeable to a moral Law, is morally *good*; whatſoever is diſagreeable to it, is morally *evil.* A Thing may be *commanded* by a Law; and then to do it is good, and not to do it is evil: Or *forbidden*; and then to do it is evil, and not to do SERM. II.

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do it is good: Or it may neither be commanded nor forbidden, no Law taking any Cognizance of it; and then it is *indifferent*, or barely and merely *lawful*; and either to do it, or not to do it, is neither good nor evil. But beſides theſe three there is a *fourth*: A Thing may be *permitted*. For this is not altogether the ſame with *indifferent*, as it is commonly imagined: For of this ſome Law may take notice, and then it is *expreſsly permitted*; as by the *Moſaic* Law the *Jews* were permitted to *divorce* their Wives: Or no Law may take notice of it, and then it is *tacitly permitted*: And this indeed is the ſame with *indifferent*. A Law again may be either *moral* or *poſitive*: Not but that *Obedience* even to a *poſitive* Law is *moral*, and *Diſobedience* to it *immoral*. But however in the Laws themſelves there is this Difference: The *former* commands ſomething *in itſelf good*, or forbids ſomething *in itſelf evil*; as, "Thou ſhalt *worſhip* "God, and *love thy Neighbour*: Thou ſhalt "not *ſteal*, nor *commit Adultery*." The *latter* commands or forbids ſomething *in itſelf indifferent*; as *baptizing with Water* among Us, and the many Ceremonies among the

the *Jews*. I mean Good and Evil *in itſelf* with regard to the *eternal Law of Reaſon* in the *Nature of Things*, the Being of which has been proved. Yet even Good and Evil in itſelf may be *again* commanded, or forbidden, with *freſh Rewards* or *Puniſhments* annex'd; and that both by Divine and Human Laws, enforcing the eternal Law of Reaſon. SERM. II.

THE *Conditions* of any Action, by which we are to judge concerning its *moral Goodneſs* or *Evil*, and the *Degrees* of *both*, are the *Object*, the *End*, and the *Circumſtances* of it. The *Object* is the *Matter* upon which it turns; the *End* is that which the Perſon *deſigns*, and *aims at*, and *for the ſake of which* he acts; the *Circumſtances* are certain *Modes* and *Appendices*, which *attend* and *accompany* the Action; as the *Quality* and *Station* of the *Perſon*, the *Time*, the *Place*, the *Means*, and the *Manner*. Some indeed ſtate it otherwiſe, including the *Object* and the *End* among the *Circumſtances:* But concerning this we need not anxiouſly contend, it being rather a Diſpute about Words, than about Things. It will be ſufficient therefore to obſerve, that the firſt ſeems to be the

SERM. II. the clearer and better Way of Stating. It is likewiſe requiſite to take notice, that it is a Queſtion whether *Circumſtances*, in this Senſe, do always only *heighten* Virtue and Vice, or do not ſometimes *conſtitute* and *make* it? *Virtue* they certainly cannot make: If the *Matter* or *End* be bad, no one Circumſtance, nor all put together, can make it good: But all, or even one of them, may make that evil, which would otherwiſe be good, or indifferent. *Make* it, I mean, not only ſo as to cauſe it to be Evil, (for that, beyond all Doubt, any bad Circumſtance does) but ſo that the Evil ſhall directly and properly conſiſt in *that*, and in *that only*: So that, in this Caſe, what is ordinarily a *mere Circumſtance* is now ſomething more, *viz.* that which makes the very *Eſſence* and *formal Reaſon* of the Vice. Thus it is unlawful to do many Things in a *Church*, or upon a *Sunday*, which would otherwiſe be blameleſs: Their being done *in* that *Place*, or *at* that *Time*, makes them ſinful; and *that only* makes them ſo. Here we may remark, by the way, That an Action in itſelf indifferent may *become good* or *evil*, not only by a *Law*'s commanding or prohibiting

ing it, (of which above) but by *our own* SERM.
Conduct and *Management*, though no Law II.
Human or Divine takes any Cognizance of it. For Inſtance: To go to ſuch a Place, or wear ſuch a Habit, may be in its *own Nature* neither good nor bad, nor *made ſo* by any *poſitive Law* of God or Man. But if it be done with an Intention to benefit one's Neighbour, or promote God's Glory, it becomes good, provided no one Condition or Circumſtance of it be evil. If it be done with an ill Deſign, or attended with any ill Circumſtance whatſoever, it becomes ſinful.

BUT to return. We ſay *firſt*, *Circumſtances*, nay *one Circumſtance* only, may ſometimes *directly conſtitute* and *make* an Action evil, ſo that the Evil ſhall formally conſiſt in *them*, or *it*. 2*dly*, The Preſence of any one ill Circumſtance makes an Action evil, whether that Evil formally conſiſt in it, or no. 3*dly*, No Circumſtance, nor all of them put together, are *ſufficient* to make an Action good, though all are *neceſſary* in order to it: Be they all never ſo right, yet, if the *Matter* or *End* be wrong, *all* is wrong. 4*thly*, Both the Good and Evil of

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Actions are *increaſed*, or *leſſened*, by the Circumſtances attending them. Thus it is a greater Vice to do an Injury to a Friend, than to an Enemy; and a greater Virtue (if other Circumſtances be right) to do a Kindneſs to an Enemy, than to a Friend. I ſay, as to this laſt-mentioned, *if other Circumſtances be right:* For if the Friend and Enemy equally want our Service, and we cannot ſerve Both, the Friend certainly ought to have the Preference. Thus again: It is a greater Wickedneſs to act, talk, or think profanely in God's Houſe, or upon his Day, than in any other Place, or at any other Time. To vindicate our Friend in the Preſence of his Enemy, and to aſſiſt and ſtand by him when others deſert him, is an Inhancement of the Virtue. To give Alms, or do any Sort of good Office to our Neighbour, is ſo much the more excellent, if it be done in the moſt obliging Manner, with the kindeſt Words, Looks, and Geſtures: And the doing of an Injury is the more aggravated, if it be with an Air of Inſolence or Triumph. Thus then both *Virtue* and *Vice* are *heighten'd* or *leſſen'd* by theſe *appendent Modes* or Circumſtances, *Time*,

Time, *Place*, the *Manner* of Acting, and the *Character* and *Quality* of the *Agent*: As they are, moreover, by the *Quantity* of the *Intention*, whether good or bad. As he who prays to God with greater *Fervency* performs that Duty better than he who prays with leſs: And the greater the *Malice* in any Aſſault, Violence, or Injuſtice whatſoever, the greater the Wickedneſs and Sin. The ſeveral *Degrees of Knowledge* likewiſe aggravate, or alleviate, the Guilt. The *more deliberately* any Sin is committed, the worſe it is. The ſtronger the *Temptation*, the greater is the Virtue in not ſinning, and the leſs the Vice in ſinning: The weaker the Temptation, the leſs the Virtue in the one, and the greater the Vice in the other. Though we muſt carefully remember, that be the Temptation never ſo preſſing, ſtill Sin is Sin, and eternal Damnation the Conſequence of it, unleſs it be ſincerely repented of, and reform'd; whatever is to be determined concerning the Degrees of the Guilt, and of that Damnation; the leaſt Degree of which laſt (as we muſt likewiſe carefully remember) is *intolerable*. SERM. II.

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BUT what gives the principal Turn and Caſt to determine the moral Good or Evil of any Action, is the *End for* which, and the *Deſign* and *Intention with* which, it is done. Thus, for Inſtance, If we go to Church only for Faſhion's ſake, not led by any Senſe of our Duty: If we give Alms only for Oſtentation, or to be rid of a troubleſome Importunity, not to relieve the Neceſſities of the Diſtreſſed; and do neither for the Glory of God: We have only the Shell, the Huſk, the Body of Virtue; the Life and Soul of it is ſtill wanting. But there cannot be a better Proof that our Intentions are right and ſincere, than that we *croſs* and *thwart* our *vicious Inclinations*. If we diſobey the *Law in our Members*, we infallibly obey the Law of God. And hither is to be referred the *Government* of our refractory and rebellious *Paſſions*: In the due Regulation of which, Virtue very greatly conſiſts.

THE Truth is, in all Inſtances, the greater the *Difficulty* in practiſing, (unleſs that Difficulty be made by our own evil Habits) the greater is the *Degree* of the *Virtue* practiſed. And here we may obſerve, by

by the way, that, at leaſt for the moſt part, the Duties towards our *Neighbour* are the eaſieſt, thoſe towards *God* the next eaſieſt, and thoſe towards *Ourſelves* the moſt difficult. To be *uncharitable*, *unjuſt*, *cruel*, and the like, is *contrary* not only to *Religion*, but to *Nature*; and though the oppoſite Virtues be very excellent, yet a Man of no very high Claſs in moral Goodneſs may practiſe *them* with little or no Reluctancy. To *love*, *worſhip*, *honour*, and *pray to* God, may indeed at firſt Sight ſeem much eaſier; and ſo, I confeſs, it is, as thoſe Duties are commonly perform'd. But to adore, praiſe, and pray to him, with thoſe *devout Affections* which the *Goſpel* requires; to be truly *ſpiritual*, and *heavenly-minded*; in a Word, to *love* him, *fear* him, *ſerve* him, and *obey* him, as *we ought to do*, is, I think, more repugnant to the vicious Inclinations of our corrupt Nature. And it is ſtill more ſo, to govern the *Motions* of our *Thoughts* and *Paſſions*, with all the *Faculties* of our *Souls*; and to keep our *Bodies* in *Temperance*, *Soberneſs*, and *Chaſtity*, as our Church Catechiſm again expreſſes it. Beſides, moſt of the Duties relating to *Ourſelves* have *likewiſe*

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a Reference to *God*, and our *Neighbours*; nay, *Curſelves* are the *Subjects* of all the Virtues and Vices, though not the *Objects*: And ſo upon this Account likewiſe the Regulation of Ourſelves muſt be the moſt difficult, as well as the moſt important, Taſk of all.

UNDER this Article the great Chriſtian Virtue of *Patience* is a little particularly, though briefly, to be conſidered. It has a View both to *God*, our *Neighbour*, and *Ourſelves*; to *God*, as it is an humble and quiet Submiſſion to his Will; to our *Neighbour*, as it hinders us from doing many Injuries and Outrages; to *Ourſelves*, as it implies the Regulation of many turbulent Paſſions ſtruggling within us. But you will ſay, How can *Patience* be properly conſider'd in a Diſcourſe upon *Actions*? Do we act by being *paſſive*? No, not *directly*: But our *Thoughts* (which, as I remark'd in the Beginning, are *Actions* in a wide Senſe) *make* us thus *paſſive*. And nothing is more acceptable and well-pleaſing to God, than our being ſo. Whoever is truly poſſeſſed of this moſt excellent Virtue, thus *governing* his *Paſſions*, has as little Reaſon as any

to

to fear the *Weighing* of his *Actions*. For nothing is a ſurer Proof of our having gain'd the Maſtery over our corrupt Inclinations, and of our being the true, faithful, obedient Children, Servants, and Subjects, of our heavenly Father, Lord, and King. If *Patience* has *its perfect Work* upon us, *Religion* certainly has; and we are *perfect, and entire, and wanting nothing.** For he who will *ſuffer* conſcientiouſly will *act* ſo too; the firſt (if there be any Difference) being a greater Proof of Sincerity, than the laſt: And the main Reaſon why Men do not *act* as they ought, is becauſe they *dare* not, or at leaſt *do* not, *ſuffer* as they ought. Here again we may well take notice (by the way too) that as this Virtue turns upon *Suffering*, ſome are apt to think they practiſe it, *becauſe* they are *Sufferers*, though at the ſame time they are highly guilty of the contrary Vice. 'Tis not in *being* afflicted, or *bearing* Afflictions, (as they ſeem to imagine) that this Virtue conſiſts; but in bearing them *quietly*, *humbly*, and with a *meek Submiſſion* to the Divine Will and Wiſdom. True, they will ſay; and this is ſo plain, that

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* James i. 4.

SERM. II. that nobody doubts it; nor is their Meaning ſuch as we charge upon them; they do not think themſelves patient in *barely* ſuffering: But I am much miſtaken, or they think themſelves patient in being *dejected*, *caſt down*, and *low-ſpirited* under their Calamities. And ſtill this is no more than *mere* Suffering; and ſuch Dejection is ſo far from being a Proof of Patience, that it often proceeds from the direct Contrary. There is a wide Difference between *Lowneſs of Spirits*, and *Lowlineſs of Mind:* Nay, nothing is more common than for a Man to be extremely dejected in Adverſity, and yet in the ſame Adverſity to be extremely proud and inſolent, impatient and outrageous, ungrateful and abuſive to his beſt Friends and Benefactors. His *Spirits* may be too *low*, and his *Spirit* too *high:* Nay, in this Caſe the firſt is actually occaſioned by the laſt; both proceeding from an Impotency and Littleneſs of Mind, and from a great Defect of true religious Principles; whatever Opinion he may have of his own extraordinary Holineſs, and undeſerved Sufferings.

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BUT to return to the *Intention*, and *End* aim'd at in any Action. It is *this*, which, join'd with the *Knowledge* of a Thing's being agreeable or contrary to a Law, makes what is call'd the *Form* of the virtuous or vicious Act, ſo far as it relates to the Agent. For the *Matter* and *Form* may be conſider'd, either as to the Virtue and Vice *itſelf*, or *both* as to *that* and the *Perſon acting*. In the firſt Reſpect, the mere *natural Action*, conſidered *nakedly in itſelf*, is the *Matter*; the *Quality*, or *diſtinguiſhing Property* of that Action, is the *Form*. Thus in Murder, the *Matter* is *Killing a Man*; the *Form* is its being done *without Authority*, or *Neceſſity*. In the ſecond Reſpect, the *Matter* is All that juſt mentioned; and the *Form* is its being done with Knowledge of its being contrary to Laws, and with a wicked malicious Intention. This, as I ſaid, is the Form of the *Vice itſelf*, as it relates to the *Agent*, but not otherwiſe. A Man then may do a Thing good or evil *materially*, but not *formally*; *i. e.* it may be good or evil in its *own Nature*, but not as it relates to *him*. The *Intention* therefore is a Condition *neceſſary* to conſtitute an

SERM. II. Action *virtuous* or *vicious*, ſo far as it relates to the *Agent*. It is not neceſſary to conſtitute it virtuous *in itſelf*, (if I give Alms, for Example, the *Action* is good *in itſelf*, though I have no good *Deſign* in it) nor much leſs to conſtitute it vicious in itſelf, for any one ill Condition will do that. It is not only *neceſſary*, but *ſufficient* to make it *evil*, both in *itſelf*, and as to the *Agent*; but it is not *ſufficient* to make it *good*, as to either. I ſay, not even as to the *Agent*: For though the Man did it with a good Deſign, yet that is but *one* Condition of the Action, even to *him*: And, except in the Caſe of invincible Ignorance, (which only *excuſes* the Action, not *dignifies* it; makes it only *pardonable*, not *good*) he might, and ought to have taken care of *all the reſt*. I have been the more minute and particular upon this, becauſe we know the ſtrange Doctrine which has lately been advanced concerning *Sincerity*; which is all one (in the Senſe of thoſe who teach it) with a *right Intention*. To proceed then.

FROM what has been above diſcourſed may be collected the great Difference between Virtue and Vice, in this Reſpect, among

among others; that, according to a well-known and moſt true Maxim, *Bonum eſt ex Cauſâ integrâ, Malum ex partiali:* Good is from an entire Cauſe, Evil from a partial: *i. e.* The Preſence of any bad Condition, or the Abſence of any requiſite good one, is ſufficient to make an Action vicious; but nothing leſs than the Abſence of all bad ones, and the Concurrence of all good ones, can make it virtuous. But then by good and bad Conditions we are here to underſtand *morally* good and bad: For certainly one or more *Circuuſtances* may not be in *all Senſes* good, and yet the *Action* may be ſo; nay, it may be in *ſome Senſe* evil, and yet the Action be *morally* good. For Inſtance: If a Man gives Alms with a ſincerely right Intention, its being done with an *ungracious Air*, or at a *Time*, or *Place*, not altogether ſo *proper* as it ſhould be, does not make it *evil*, no nor ſo much as *indifferent*; but it ſtill remains *good*, tho' not ſo good as it might be; and though it would have been *better*, had it been done in a better *Manner*, *Time*, or *Place*. So that here the Circumſtances, being only *thus far* ill, *viz.* only *improper*, or *indecent*, not *ſinful*, SERM. II.

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ful, or *unlawful*, do only *leſſen*, not *deſtroy*, the *Goodneſs* of the Action. Thus again: If a Man acted by a *Zeal according to Knowledge* * for the Glory of God, and the Salvation of Souls, bravely oppoſes any prevailing Corruption, either by Acting or Speaking, and is perfectly right as to the *Matter*, but in *ſome Senſe*, and in *ſome Meaſure*, wrong as to the *Manner*, as perhaps being too much tranſported, dropping ſome little indecent Expreſſions, or falling into ſome little indiſcreet Paſſions; aſſuredly all this renders not the Action *evil*, no not *indifferent*; but it is *good* notwithſtanding: Though had it been more duly circumſtanced, it would have been *better*, and more acceptable to God and Man. For, after all, this is only ſomething of *Human Infirmity* mixing itſelf with the Practice of a great and neceſſary Duty, and with an excellently good and laudable Performance: For ſo it may be, notwithſtanding ſome Infirmity; otherwiſe, God knows, there would be nothing good in Man. The true State of the Point therefore is this: There muſt be no Circumſtance, no Condition what-

* Rom. x. ii.

whatſoever, *evil*, i. e. *ſinful*, or *unlawful* (always underſtanding by thoſe Words ſomething more than what ariſes from mere human Frailty and Infirmity): If there be, the Action is *evil*. And ſo for the other Parts of this Doctrine concerning Circumſtances and Conditions, to which this general Obſervation may be applied. SERM. II.

WHAT has been above diſcourſed may likewiſe ſuggeſt to us the Difference between Actions good and evil *in themſelves*, and good and evil *by Accident*: As alſo that between *Lawful* and *Expedient*, *Unlawful* and *Inexpedient*; and particularly the Caſe of giving *Scandal*, or *Offence*. But as I have elſewhere * diſcuſſed theſe important Points, I ſhall paſs them over here, without any Repetition. But it is further to be obſerved at preſent, that there are many *Errors* and *Dangers* about Things in themſelves *lawful* and *indifferent*, (as alſo about Things *naturally neceſſary*) in other Reſpects, as well as with regard to *Scandal*. As to thoſe which are *plainly unlawful*, and *in themſelves evil*, Men are eaſily warned and convinced, how often ſoever they may act againſt ſuch Warning

* *Preſervative againſt unſettled Notions*, Vol. II. Diſc. 4.

SERM. II. Warning and Conviction. That Murder and Adultery, Lying and Injuſtice, *&c.* are wicked and abominable, All acknowledge; but the Generality, it is to be feared, reaſon ill (and act accordingly) concerning Matters *of themſelves* indeed *lawful*, but yet in great Danger of being *abuſed*, and ſo *by Accident* becoming *ſinful*. Of this Kind are Eating, Drinking, and Sleeping, Cloathing, and Building, and the like; together with all Sorts of Diverſions and Recreations whatſoever. Becauſe the Things are, in their own Nature, ALL *morally indifferent*, and SOME OF THEM *naturally neceſſary*; what Harm is there, ſay they, in playing at this or that Game, in wearing ſuch or ſuch Cloaths, in building this magnificent Houſe, or keeping that ſplendid Equipage; and ſo likewiſe in Eating, Drinking, and Sleeping? Not conſidering that there is great Danger of their *abuſing* all theſe Things, and that they often actually do abuſe them: That though the Things *themſelves* be *lawful*, yet the *Abuſe* of them is *ſinful*: That though this or that Game, Dreſs, Building, Way of Living, be innocent ſimply conſider'd; yet in the *firſt*, miſ-ſpending our precious

precious Time by ſitting too long at it, Co- SERM.
vetouſneſs, and much more downright II.
Cheating, immoderate Paſſion and Rage at
their Loſſes and Diſappointments; in *all the reſt*, Pride, Luxury, Prodigality, and Extravagance, are highly criminal: That though Eating, Drinking, and Sleeping, be not only *lawful* in a *moral* Senſe, but *neceſſary* in a *natural* one; yet Intemperance in all three, *viz.* Gluttony in the *firſt*, Drunkenneſs in the *ſecond*, and Sloth in the *third*, are great and grievous Sins: That though the moderate Uſe of any innocent Recreations be not only *lawful*, but *commendable*; yet the Exceſs of them is always *ſinful*: Not conſidering moreover, that it is difficult to diſcern exactly *when*, and *in what*, theſe Things *begin* to be *abuſed*, and ſo to *become unlawful*. For there is no preciſe *Line* between *Sobriety* and *Drunkenneſs*, for Inſtance, determining the very *Point* where *that* ends, and *this* begins; And ſo in a thouſand other Caſes of the like Nature. Yet here we are not in the dark neither, but have Light ſufficient to guide us. To repeat the Inſtance juſt now mentioned; A Man may be very ſure that himſelf, or another,

SERM. II. other, is at this or that Time guilty of the odious Vice there ſpecified, though he may not know the preciſe Moment when he *began* to be ſo. What then muſt he do to avoid this Sin? The Rule is very plain: Let him leave his Liquor, before he is at all diſorder'd by it, or when he apprehends himſelf to be in Danger of being ſo; and conſider too, that he may *tranſgreſs* the Duty of *Sobriety*, and be *intemperate* in *Drinking*, without being what is commonly call'd by that foul and (in our Language) ill-ſounding Name, which I care not to repeat. The ſame is to be ſaid of all other Sins (for many ſuch there are) which are in their Nature akin to this.

LET us remember likewiſe, that the *near Approaches* to what is *unlawful* are *dangerous*, though not ſtrictly *unlawful*: For there is a Difference in theſe Caſes, between *Indiſcreet* and *Dangerous* on the one hand, and *Sinful* or *Unlawful* on the other. It is *barely lawful*, though *highly imprudent*, and as little an Argument of *true Virtue*, as of *true Wiſdom*, to go to the utmoſt Bounds of Lawful, if we really keep within thoſe Bounds: For there is the Difficulty; and we

we may, as many often do, exceed them before we are aware. It is likewiſe *dangerous*, and therefore *indiſcreet*, to put ourſelves into the Road of Temptations, when we can reaſonably avoid it; but (unleſs it be done out of preſumptuous Confidence in our own Strength and Virtûe, Tempting God, or Spiritual Pride) we cannot ſay it is ſtrictly *unlawful*. This is certain: We give much better Proofs of our Love to God, and our Abhorrence of Vice, (as well as of our Wiſdom and Prudence) by keeping ourſelves at a due Diſtance from what is unlawful, and not making the utmoſt Uſe of our Liberty. If we reſolve to do *every thing* which we *may*, 'tis a Million to one but we do a thouſand which we *may not*. SERM. II.

TENDENCIES to *Sin* are of two Kinds; thoſe which *are*, and thoſe which *are not*, in *themſelves ſinful*. For the firſt of theſe, To play at Cards, or Dice, has in ſome Perſons at leaſt a ſtrong *Tendency* to Covetouſneſs and immoderate Paſſion; yet we do not preſume to ſay that it is *in its own Nature unlawful*: But however, becauſe in thoſe Perſons it has ſuch a ſtrong Tendency, it ought by them in Prudence to be avoided.

For

SERM. II. For the ſecond, Unchaſte Words, or even Thoughts, though they *be* not *formally* Fornication or Adultery, yet have not only a *Tendency* to thoſe *horrid Sins*, but are *directly ſinful* in *themſelves*; and ſo are by all Perſons to be avoided, not only in Prudence, but in ſtrict Duty.

BUT to reſume and conclude our Diſquiſition concerning *Things indifferent*. About the Diverſions, Amuſements, and Recreations of Life, there are two groſs and dangerous Errors; which, being in Extremes, are (according to Cuſtom) as oppoſite to the Truth, as they are to one another. Some condemn them as *abſolutely unlawful*; and ſome, on the contrary, think (or at leaſt act as if they thought) that *any Uſe*, or even *Abuſe* of them is *lawful*. To theſe latter enough has been ſaid already: For thoſe on the other Extreme, they are the *pretended Saints*, whom I noted in the former Diſcourſe; who tell us, that we muſt do nothing but what we have a ſpecial Warrant for in *Scripture*; and that in all our Actions, though never ſo inconſiderable, we muſt actually deſign and intend

tend the Glory of God. From the ſame Quarter blows that *Wind of Doctrine* which I am now pointing at, which ſends People to Hell (without Repentance) for playing at any Game, for ſeeing any Repreſentation on the Theatre, though never ſo innocent; for a pleaſant Tale, a Tune, or a Song; in ſhort, for every thing that is chearful and diverting: As if Religion conſiſted in being (like themſelves) moroſe, ſour, and ſullen; and Ill-nature and Ill-manners were Means neceſſary to Salvation. How do they *prove* theſe Things to be unlawful? From what Text of *Scripture?* Or by what juſt Conſequence deduced from one? Why, they are *Vanities:* So is every thing in this World, more or leſs; our Lives themſelves are vain; but they would be yet vainer than they are, were they not ſupported by theſe and ſuch-like Vanities: Againſt which there is no Law that I could ever hear of; and *where there is no Law, there is no Tranſgreſſion.** But it is needleſs to go about to diſprove ſo

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* Rom. iv. 15.

SERM. II. trifling an Abſurdity. It is ſufficiently confuted, and expoſed too, by being ſhewn: And ſo I leave it for the preſent, and ſhall return to my Subject in a ſubſequent Diſcourſe.

SERMON

SERMON III.

The Moral Goodneſs and Evil of Human Actions.

The *Third* Sermon on this Subject.

1 SAM. II. 3.

---And by him Actions are weighed.

WHAT is commonly ſaid, of Virtue conſiſting in a *Mediocrity*, as Vice does in ſome *Extreme*, is true in moſt Inſtances, though not univerſally. Virtue indeed is not always, if ever, placed *exactly* in the Middle between the Extremes, (even where there is one on each Side of it) but it *generally* at leaſt inclines to one more than the other. The *Heathen* Moraliſts might perhaps think

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SERM. III. immoderate Abſtinence as great a Fault as Intemperance, though I believe they did not: But certainly a *Chriſtian* will pronounce the *firſt* much more pardonable than the *laſt*. However, they are *both* Extremes, and conſequently *both* Faults, though not *equal* Faults: And Virtue moſt certainly lies *between* them, if not in the *Middle* of them. There is indeed vulgarly reckon'd but *one* Vice contrary to every Virtue; as Pride to Humility, immoderate Anger to Meekneſs, *&c.* becauſe *that one* is by far the moſt dangerous, and our Nature is moſt propenſe to it. But ſtill there is *another* wrong Side, upon which ſome make a Shift to ſtumble. There are thoſe who, that they may not incur the Imputation of Pride, ſhew all Tokens of Reſpect to Perſons who are by many Degrees their Inferiors: And others, who, to avoid Intemperance, feed on nothing but Herbs and Roots. This, if it be not commonly call'd a *Sin*, is a *Folly*, and a *Fault* too; which ought rather to be *blamed*, though *pitied*, than *commended* in *this* World; and, I am apt to think, will be rather *pardon'd*, than *rewarded*, in the *next*.

THIS

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THIS Extreme meets with a very favourable Cenſure: For though it is allow'd to be a Fault, yet it is, in ordinary Language, only ſo far one, as it denominates the Perſon, of whom it is ſpoken, *exceſſively virtuous.* Thus Men are ſaid to be charitable, humble, merciful, and ſober, *to a Fault:* Which is the ſame in effect as to ſay, they are ſo *very virtuous*, that they are *vicious.* If we call this Exceſs a Fault, as it certainly is, we ſhould not join it with Mercy, Humility, *&c.* from which it deviates; unleſs we would make Vice and Virtue reconcileable. The Short of the Matter I take to be this: We *want Words* to expreſs thoſe Vices by, which are the Extremes in *Exceſs* of thoſe Virtues juſt named, and ſome others: And ſo when we would communicate our Thoughts concerning them, for want of a better Way of ſpeaking, we ſay ſuch a one is *religious*, &c. *to a Fault.* Thus by the Scantineſs of Language we are obliged to join two very different and diſagreeing Conceptions: And it ought to be look'd upon as a very conſiderable Defect in Language, that it cannot furniſh us with a Term for one of the Ex-

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tremes of many Virtues diſtinct from thoſe Virtues themſelves; ſince the *Ideas* in our Minds are, or ought to be, ſo very *ſeparate*. To talk of being *too good* is the laſt of Abſurdities: While we endeavour to *over-do* our Duty, we ſhall be ſure to *under-do* it; for it is impoſſible that *Virtue* and *Exceſs* ſhould be *conſiſtent*: Becauſe, if they were, Man might be more perfect than God deſign'd him. From whence it appears, that the *Exceſs* of *Virtue* is *not virtuous*: And when any *Virtue* riſes beyond its Bounds, and runs into an *Extreme*, it loſes its *Nature*, and degenerates into *Vice*: And ſince it loſes its *Nature*, it ought to loſe its *Name* too.

WHILE we are ſpeaking of *Mediocrity* and *Extremes*, we might ſeem guilty of an unpardonable Omiſſion, ſhould we take no notice of *Moderation*; a Thing much talk'd of, and ſo little underſtood. The Word occurs but once * in all the Scriptures of our *Engliſh* Verſion: And even then another would have done *as well*, if not *better*. In that Place the original Word moſt properly ſignifies *Equity*, ſoftening the Rigour of Laws, or not ſeverely inſiſting upon the

* Phil. iv. 5.

ſummum

ſummum Jus, as it is commonly call'd. It *may be* indeed, and in *that* Place doubtleſs *is*, uſed in a wider Senſe; for *Humanity*, *Candor*, *Patience*, *Modeſty*, *Governing the Paſſions*, *Avoiding Extremes*, or (if you pleaſe) *Moderation*. Whatever it means, it certainly does *not* mean Indifference or Lukewarmneſs in the doing of our Duty, nor relaxing thoſe Obligations which God and Nature have laid upon us, nor tamely giving up a good Cauſe to its Enemies, nor a baſe cowardly Yieldance and Submiſſion to the perverſe Humours and Vices of thoſe with whom we have to do. SERM. III.

UNDER this Article of *Extremes*, we are to conſider the Danger of being *drawn into a bad Quality by a good one*, as in *Exceſs* of *Zeal*; and of *turning our Advantages to our Detriment*, in another Reſpect beſides that juſt now mention'd, as in the Caſe of *Spiritual Pride*. A *Vice* may be *grafted* upon a *Virtue*; but let us carefully remember, that when it is ſo, the *Trunk* withers, and generally dies, and the *Graft* takes Root and flouriſhes in its ſtead.

ANOTHER very material Difference with regard to Moral Good and Evil is this:

SERM. III. Laws *forbidding* oblige *always* to *actual* Obedience; Laws *commanding* oblige *always* to *habitual* Obedience, but not to *actual*. The Meaning is: We are obliged at all Times, in all Places, in all Circumſtances whatſoever, *not to do* what is *forbidden*; but obliged *to do* what is *commanded*, only when we have Power and Opportunity. The Reaſon of the Diſtinction is plain: We may want Ability and Opportunity *to do* a good Thing, but can never want either *not to do* an ill one. This takes away the Foundation of that fooliſh Pretence, "I did it indeed, "but I could not help it, I could not avoid "it." You might have avoided it, if you would. A Man, it is true, may be unable *to do* this or that; but to ſay he is not able *not to do* it, is flat Nonſenſe. Yes; but he was *forced* to it. That again is impoſſible: The *Will* cannot be *forced*; and *without* the *Will* conſenting, the *Man cannot act*. All that can be ſaid is, he may act *reluctantly*, and, as it is commonly (though improperly) call'd, *unwillingly*, through Fear of ſome threaten'd Evil impending over him. But while he *acts*, he does and muſt *chuſe* to act; And he ſo *chuſes*, becauſe, though he

he judges *even this* to be an *Evil*, yet he judges *that other* to be a *greater*. SERM. III.

VERY well, it may be ſaid; and is he not in the right? Of *two Evils*, is not the *leaſt* to be *choſen?* It is, if *both* of them be Evils of *temporal Loſs*, *Damage*, or *Suffering*, only: But if *one* of them be *ſuch*, and the other an Evil of *Guilt*, or a *Sin*, and both cannot be avoided, he is to chuſe the former, and refuſe the latter; and that indeed, according to this very Principle, becauſe it is the *leſs* Evil. But if they be both Evils of *Guilt*, i. e. *Sins*, he is to chuſe neither. And here that famous, and (if rightly ſtated) moſt true Maxim, *Of two Evils the leaſt*, entirely fails, and has no Place: I mean, ſo as to determine us to chuſe either of the Sins; for in the main it takes place here too, as I ſhall ſhew preſently. But if he is to refuſe *both*, (it will be alledged) how ſhall he *act*? I anſwer, He muſt not *act at all*; he muſt *ſuffer*; and ſo practiſe the great, the main, the fundamental Duty of Chriſtianity. But ſtill, even of two *Sins*, cannot one be *greater*, and the other *leſs?* And conſequently, does not the above-mention'd Maxim take place here?

SERM. III. here? I ſay again, we *may* avoid *both*, and therefore *ought* to do ſo, even for the Reaſon upon which that Maxim proceeds. The *Medium* between the *two Actings* is *Suffering*: And it is better to endure the greateſt Pains that can be inflicted in this Life, than the Puniſhment of the leaſt Sin to all Eternity in the next. So even upon that Principle, *chuſing the leaſt Evil*, when *two Sins* are propoſed, we ought to chuſe *neither*.

THOUGH the Words *Commiſſion* and *Omiſſion* are generally applied to *Sins*, and, in the ordinary Uſe of Language, carry an ill Meaning; yet if we reſtrain the Senſe of them to *doing*, and *not doing*, they are altogether as applicable to Virtue as to Vice: For we may be virtuous both by Acting, and not Acting, as well as vicious: Which may be collected from what has been ſaid in more Places than one of this Diſcourſe. Whenever any thing is *commanded*, its Contrary is *forbidden*; and, on the reverſe, whenever any thing is *forbidden*, its Contrary is *commanded*: So that here *Poſitive* and *Negative* mutually ſuppoſe each other. But I wave *Speculation*. This I am ſure ought to be obſerved in order to *Practice*:

That

That Sins of *Omiſſion* are, generally, not near ſo much *minded*, as thoſe of *Commiſſion*. And yet *thoſe* may be as great and heinous as *theſe*, and ſometimes much greater. For Example: It is *much more* criminal, *not* to give Alms, and *not* to worſhip God, than to *ſpeak idle* and *evil Words*, unleſs they be *very evil* Words indeed; and *full as* criminal, as *Swearing*, and *Drunkenneſs*, and many other Sins of *Commiſſion*, which I need not ſpecify. Yet ſo it is; thoſe of *Omiſſion*, being not of a *poſitive* Nature, do not ſtrike ſo forcibly, nor make ſo deep Impreſſions upon the Minds of Men. How few (to paſs by a thouſand other Inſtances) attend the publick Worſhip of God, ſo often as they might and ought? How many are there, who flatter themſelves by thinking *they do no Hurt?* Though even in that they are certainly miſtaken, yet what *Good* do they? What think they of *Idleneſs*, *Doing nothing*, or (which is much the ſame) miſ-ſpending their precious Time altogether upon Trifles? There are Arguments more than enough, both from Scripture and Reaſon, (if the Matter needs any) to ſhew that in all Perſons, the Higheſt, and SERM. III.

SERM. III. and the Loweſt, and thoſe between them, to *have left undone thoſe Things which they ought to have done*, is no leſs ſinful and deſtructive of Souls, than to *have done thoſe Things which they ought not to have done.*

BUT, flattering themſelves, they may perhaps alledge, that *Omiſſions* ſeem to proceed purely from *Inadvertency*, and *Want of Attention*; and ſo to be in a manner *involuntary:* Which cannot ſo well be pleaded in Excuſe of a *poſitive Action*, where there muſt neceſſarily be *actual Thought*, and the *explicit Conſent of the Will.* I anſwer, 1*ſt*, There is as much of the Will in *ſome* Omiſſions at leaſt, as in *ſome* Commiſſions. Let any Man aſk his own Conſcience, whether his *Will* does not as much *hinder* him from going to Church, or giving Alms, as *make* him cheat, lie, or *do* any thing whatſoever? 2*dly*, The *Inadvertency*, and *Want of Attention*, which they alledge, if it be *real*, is their own Fault: For to what Purpoſe was the Faculty of Thinking given us, if not to be made uſe of? *Ignorance* indeed excuſes, if it be *involuntary:* But if it be *voluntary*, it is itſelf the greateſt of Crimes; and no one wilful Crime (much leſs the greateſt)

greateſt) can be juſtly pleaded in Excuſe of another. SERM. III.

THOUGH the *more* or *leſs* of the *Will* there is in any Action, the *better* or *worſe* the Action is; yet there is a great and grievous Miſtake about this Matter, (and that too often a wilful one) grounded on a Notion (true, if rightly ſtated, but moſt falſe and pernicious, if otherwiſe) of *God's accepting the Will for the Deed.* He does ſo, if it be *truly* and *really* the *Will:* But thouſands deceive *themſelves* and *others*, by *fancying*, or *pretending*, it *is*, when it *is not.* Nothing can prove it to be ſo, (if we can do *any thing*) but our *actually doing as much as we can.* This alone, if we can do any thing, is to be *truly willing:* Not, 1*ſt*, A bare *Liking* or *Approbation* of Virtue and Goodneſs. No Thanks to us for that: Virtue, in ſpite *of* us, *commands* and *extorts* ſo much *from* us. Nor, 2*dly*, A lazy *Velleity*, *Wiſh*, or *Deſire*, towards it. Nor, 3*dly*, A *bare Reſolution* to purſue and embrace it. No nor, 4*thly*, *Doing ſomething* towards it, if we *ſtop ſhort*, and do not our *utmoſt.* But, 5*thly*, Then, and then *only*, the *Will* is *real*, and *therefore* accepted in lieu of the *Deed*; either

SERM. III. either when the *Will* is our *All*, no *outward Action* being in our *Power*; or when, being *able* to *do ſomething*, we do *as much* as we *are able:* Always underſtanding by this laſt Expreſſion, doing *as much* of what we *can*, in any particular Inſtance, as we *ought* to do, according to the Meaſures of *Reaſon* and *Prudence*, the *Nature* and *Boundaries* of the *ſeveral Virtues*, and the *Analogy* of our *Duty* taken *all together:* Of which more hereafter. If a Man indeed *fully reſolve* to do a Thing, whether good or bad, and *actually ſets about it*, and is *hinder'd* from *executing* it *only* by *Want of Power*; there, without Queſtion, the *Will* goes for the *Deed*, in both: The Good or Evil, the Virtue or Vice, is *finiſhed* and *completed.* Finiſhed and completed, I ſay, though not *ſo great*, as if the *outward Action* had follow'd. That being *ſuperadded* muſt, as I think, *add ſomething* to the *Good*, or *Evil:* Though others may be of a different Opinion; about which we need not diſpute at preſent.

IT has all along been ſuppoſed (as it is moſt true) that Virtue and Vice conſiſt in *Acting*, or *Not Acting:* And therefore mere *conſtitutional Motions*, or *Inclinations*, do not deſerve

deſerve the Name of either. Many are apt to think that they are good or bad Men, purely becauſe they are well or ill *diſpoſed:* But this is ſo far from being true, that if we *act not accordingly*, thoſe Diſpoſitions are *Aggravations* of our *Guilt*, or *Inhancements* of our *Virtue.* If we be naturally well inclined, and act not accordingly, we are the more *vicious:* If we be naturally ill inclined, and act not accordingly, we are the more *virtuous.* They are our *Actions*, not our *Conſtitutions*, which are *weigh'd*, as to Moral Good and Evil. *In this* (ſays St. *John*) *the Children of God are manifeſt, and the Children of the Devil: Whoſoever* DOTH *not Righteouſneſs is not of God.** And ſo on the reverſe, he that DOTH Righteouſneſs *is* of God. A *good Diſpoſition* is a great *Advantage* indeed; but for *that very Reaſon*, if it be not made uſe of and improved, it tends to our *Condemnation:* And a *bad Diſpoſition* is a great *Diſadvantage*; but for *that very Reaſon*, if it be thwarted and overcome, it tends to our *Glory* and *Salvation.* If our good or ill Inclinations be *complied with*, we are ſo far good or ill Men: But it is becauſe SERM. III.

* 1 John iii. 10.

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cauſe we ſo *act*, not becauſe we are ſo *inclin'd*.

IN the Accounts of *Morality* nothing is more carefully to be conſider'd, than the Doctrine of *End and Means*. I have already proved that a good Intention is not ſufficient to make an Action good. From whence appears the pernicious Error of thoſe, who teach (as the *Jeſuits* do) that the *End ſanctifies the Means*; or, in other Words, teach us *to do Evil, that Good may come*; contrary to the Doctrine of St. *Paul*,* as well as to Common Reaſon, and the Nature of Things: It being impoſſible that what is *in itſelf* morally Evil, ſhould in any View, in any Reſpect, become morally Good, or *ordinable* to that which is ſo. If it be *ipſo facto* unlawful, *in* and *of* itſelf eſſentially *Evil*, nothing can make it *Good*, nor even *Lawful* or *Indifferent*. And the *Conſequence* of the other *Opinion* muſt be abſolute Confuſion of Principles and Practice, Turning the Moral World upſide down, Taking Evil for Good, and Good for Evil, and the utter Subverſion of all Honeſty and Virtue.

No

* Rom. iii. 8.

No leſs worthy to be well *weigh'd* upon this Subject is the Doctrine of *Conſequences*; about which there are great and dangerous Errors on both Extremes. *As to our Duty* indeed, we *muſt* regard Conſequences, *viz.* our *Happineſs* the Effect of doing it, and our *Miſery* the Effect of not doing it: This being no more than propoſing a due End of our Actions, which is abſolutely neceſſary. But we muſt not be *hinder'd from our Duty* by *accidental* Conſequences, though they will never ſo probably, nay certainly, follow. What then? Ought we to make no Account even of *theſe?* Yes, a great deal, with reſpect to the *Manner of Acting*, and other Circumſtances, *pro hic & nunc* (as the Schools ſpeak). With a View to *theſe*, we ſhould either *immediately execute*, or for ſome time *ſuſpend* the Execution of our Deſigns; but not totally *neglect*, or *violate*, our *Duty*, upon the Account of *Conſequences*, as many Thouſands do. We muſt remember, that our *Actions* only are imputable to *Us*: *Conſequences* muſt be left to *God*, who alone has the Diſpoſal of them. As to *particular Circumſtances* then, there is Room for *particularly prudential* and *diſcretionary* SERM. III.

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Conſideration of *Conſequences*: But as to our *Duty* itſelf, even in a *particular Inſtance*, no *Prudence* takes place, but the *general Prudence* or Wiſdom of *doing our Duty*. This is *abſolutely neceſſary*, be the Conſequences what they will, either to Ourſelves or Others.

To the *weighing* or *meaſuring* of our Actions nothing more ſtrictly and properly belongs, than *ſetting out* and *determining* the *Boundaries* and *Limits* of the *ſeveral Virtues*. I ſay *Virtues*: As for *Vices*, they are out of this Queſtion: We are not to *bound* and limit *them*, for that ſuppoſes an *Allowance* of them; but to *deſtroy* them, and have nothing at all to do with them. But for the Virtues, they may be conſider'd either, *Firſt*, as they are *in themſelves*, and alſo as they relate to *particular Perſons*, who are, or ought to be, the Subjects of them. And here their Bounds or Limits cannot, and need not, be aſcertain'd: As in the Caſe of *Temperance*; though the *Nature* of it, and of its oppoſite Vices, be ſufficiently known, yet there is no *determinate Quantity* of *Meat* or *Drink* to be preſcribed; becauſe that muſt vary, according to the *different Conſti-*

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tutions of particular Perſons. So again in *Almſgiving*, no *certain Sum* can be ſpecified; but that muſt depend upon the Ability, Diſcretion, and Conſcience of the Giver, and the Wants and Deſerts of the Perſons relieved. And ſo in many other Caſes, which we cannot, and need not, mention: Reaſon, and Prudence, and Conſcience, are the ſame in all of them. *Commutative Juſtice* indeed is *fix'd* and *unvariable*, and the ſame in all Circumſtances; alters not according to the Abilities of the *Agent*, nor the Abilities or Merit of the Perſon who is the *Object* of it: For a *poor* Man muſt no more *cheat*, or *defraud*, than a *rich* one; and the *richeſt*, and *moſt wicked*, muſt no more be *cheated* and *defrauded*, than the *pooreſt*, and *moſt virtuous*. *Secondly*, The Boundaries and Limits of the ſeveral Virtues may be conſider'd as thoſe Virtues relate to *each other*, and alſo to the general Maxims of *Reaſon* and *Equity*. For Inſtance: How far is *Mercy* to be extended, in reſpect of *Juſtice*? How far muſt *Long-ſuffering*, or *Bearing with Others*, reach, in reſpect of *Self-defence*, and *our own Peace* and *Quiet*? Why here again, as in many SERM. III.

SERM. III. like Caſes, *Prudence* and *good Senſe*, uncorrupted by *Selfiſhneſs* or *Prejudice*, a *pure, well-inform'd Conſcience*, and a *ſincere* Regard to our *Duty in the main*, muſt *in general* determine us. But more *particularly*; *Mercy* muſt exert itſelf, till *Juſtice* becomes *neceſſary:* Then the Office of the former expires, and the latter is to take place. *When* that Neceſſity happens, right Reaſon will eaſily and truly judge: As will appear from the Conſideration of the next Inſtance, nearly akin to this. We muſt bear with the very often repeated Injuries, unjuſt Reproaches, Baſeneſs and Ingratitude of our Friends or Relations, till they are altogether *inſufferable*; meaning by that, till the Perſons appear utterly incorrigible, and their Behaviour to us is ſuch that it deſtroys the Peace and Quiet of Ourſelves or Families. When it comes to this, we ought to *abandon* and *avoid* them: For that is what I intend by *no longer bearing with them.* As for *pardoning* and *forgiving* them, having the moſt ſincere *good Will to* them, and heartily *praying for* them; this we muſt ſet *no Bounds* to: Thus far we muſt forgive them, though they *offend againſt us* not only till *ſeventy times*

times ſeven, but till ſeventy hundred thou- SERM.
ſand times; *i. e.* (as our Saviour's other III.
Number is to be underſtood) *for ever*. But
when it comes to that Extremity which I
mentioned, to *avoid* them is not only *law-
ful*, but *neceſſary*: There is *Juſtice* due to
ourſelves, as well as *Charity* to *them*: We
are now only *providing for our own Safety*;
and that ſure is always *lawful*. We muſt
indeed be cautious that we deceive not our-
ſelves in this Matter. If the Perſon be
nearly related to us; if he be *in Want*, and
we *well able* to relieve him; it would be a
good Deed, and *highly commendable*, to relieve
him *at a diſtance*, though not to *converſe*
with him, unleſs we had *undoubted Proofs*
of his *thorough Reformation*. I ſay, it would
be a *good Deed*; for (conſidering his Beha-
viour) I cannot ſay it would be a *ſtrict Du-
ty*; unleſs the Perſon be a *Parent*. If that
be the Relation, he or ſhe ought to be re-
lieved by us, let his or her *Behaviour* to-
wards us be what it will. I cannot ſay the
ſame of *Children*, the Caſes being widely
different: A Man is a *Governor* to his *Chil-
dren*, but a *Subject* to his *Parents*. I have
not Time to ſtate this Point at large, though

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it deſerves a more particular Diſcuſſion. By being *ſo* particular upon it as I have been, I am ſenſible I have made a little Digreſſion: But I hope it may be excuſed; ſince it is a Caſe which very often happens in human Life; and I know none ſo apt and proper to illuſtrate this great Point under Conſideration, *viz.* Settling the Limits and Boundaries of *ſeveral Virtues*, which ſeem to be *Checks* and *Reſtraints* upon each other: The adjuſting of which is perhaps one of the moſt difficult Taſks in all Morality. But to proceed.

IN many Caſes it is not ſo much *Virtue* in *doing* our Duty, as *Vice* in *not* doing it. Thus, 'tis no great Glory not to injure our Neighbours, but 'tis very wicked to injure them. To worſhip God deſerves no great Reward, but not to worſhip him deſerves a ſevere Puniſhment. Nor is Temperance ſo lovely and beautiful, as Gluttony and Drunkenneſs are odious and deteſtable. In ſome Inſtances the Virtue on the one hand, and the Vice on the other, may perhaps be near equal: As Patience and Impatience; and indeed the Governing, or not Governing, of all our rebellious Paſſions, both iraſcible

iraſcible and concupiſcible. The *Virtue*, I think, is never *greater* than the *Vice*; I mean here with reſpect to the preciſe Doing, or not Doing, our Duty: For as to Degrees, it may. Thus, it is not more excellent to *give* Alms, than wicked *not* to give; (no, nor ſo much neither; for this, however it be call'd *Charity*, is in truth one Species of *Juſtice*, a Part of our *Stewardſhip*; and after all, we are but *unprofitable Servants:*) but ſure 'tis more praiſe-worthy to build a Church, or an Hoſpital, than blame-worthy not to build one: Nay, we cannot ſay the latter is any Fault or Sin at all. We may do *ſome* good Things, which in ſtrict Duty we are not *obliged* to do; and here 'tis only *Virtue* on the *one* hand, not *Vice* on the *other*. This is what we commonly call *Heroic* Virtue or Piety: For ſuch a Thing there certainly is, though ſome *Objections* lie againſt it. As, 1*ſt*, It may be aſk'd, Are we not obliged in every thing to do that which is *beſt*; and conſequently is there any Room for our doing *more* than we are bound to in ſtrict *Duty*? I anſwer, We are not ſo obliged. If in Matters of a moral Nature we

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SERM. III. always do what is *good*, (though it be not always the *beſt*) and nothing which is *evil*, we undoubtedly ſatisfy our Duty. This might be proved from Reaſon, and the Nature of the Thing; but the Arguments being ſpeculative, I wave them. From Scripture it plainly appears, that we may do *well* in *one* Degree, and yet *better* in *another*; the latter implying what we are not obliged to, as in the Caſe about *Marriage* ſtated by St. *Paul*. 2*dly*, It may be alledged, that this ſeems to favour the Doctrine of the Papiſts concerning *Supererogation*: But it only *ſeems* to favour it. *They* conceive a Man's Life, *upon the Whole*, to be ſo *extraordinarily good*, nay *meritorious*, that he may have a *Superfluity* of good Works, and even Merits, which may be given or ſold to other Men, for the Supply of their Deficiencies. *We* not only *grant*, but *inſiſt*, that the beſt of Men, *upon the Whole*, are and muſt be *unprofitable Servants*, and grievous Sinners, wanting the Merits of *Jeſus Chriſt* to ſupply *their own* manifold Deficiencies; but yet, notwithſtanding this, they may in ſome *particular Inſtances* do more than is in Strictneſs

Strictneſs required of them. 3*dly*, Does not this, it may be ſaid, contradict what I myſelf before aſſerted, in another Part of this Diſcourſe, *viz.* That by pretending to *over-do* our Duty, we certainly *under-do* it; that the Exceſs of Virtue is vicious; and that to be *too good* is abſurd and impoſſible? No, here is no ſuch Contradiction: Becauſe I *there* ſuppoſe Virtue by its Exceſs to degenerate into ſome Vice, as an Extreme, bordering upon it; Over-doing our Duty in *that* Senſe, without queſtion, is under-doing it; and to be too good is indeed impoſſible. *Here* I ſuppoſe the Perſon not to run into any vicious Extreme, (as by building a Church or an Hoſpital before mention'd he ſurely does not) but only to perform ſomething excellent, and more than he is ſtrictly bound to. Here, if he *muſt* be ſaid to over-do his Duty, 'tis not by a *vicious Exceſs*, but by *extraordinary Virtue:* And he is not *too good*, (for that, as I ſaid, is impoſſible) but *eminently* and *ſuperlatively good*. And to this we may add, (more fully to anſwer the foregoing Objection about *Supererogation)* that a Man may, in one or more particular Inſtances, be SERM. III.

SERM. III. be even *eminently virtuous*, and yet upon the Whole be *very vicious*.

NEARLY related to this Queſtion is another, and that commonly reſolved wrong: Whether we are obliged to do *all the Good we can?* Such of thoſe as reſolve it in the Affirmative certainly take it wrong, while they make one Virtue encroach upon another, and perhaps upon all the reſt: As when, upon this Notion, they give all they have to the Poor; thereby injuring their Families, and ſo being *really unjuſt* by *ſeeming* to be *very charitable*. But ſetting aſide this plain Caſe, and ſuppoſing that all we do is really virtuous: I anſwer to the Queſtion, That though it be our Wiſdom, and our Intereſt, and a Proof of our Sincerity, to ſet no Bounds to our Virtue in the main, nor to content ourſelves with juſt barely doing our Duty, but to preſs forward with all our Might, and be as virtuous, and holy, and religious as may be, upon this Conſideration, that there is no Fear, nor even Poſſibility, of our being *too good*, but great Danger of our not being *good enough*: I ſay, though all this be very true, and carefully to be ponder'd and practiſed by us, yet we cannot

cannot affirm that, ſtrictly ſpeaking, we are *obliged* to do *all the Good we can*, no nor upon the Whole to *be* as good as we can. If we do all that we are commanded, and nothing that is forbidden, it is manifeſt we ſatisfy our Duty: Yet (as I have juſt now ſhewn) we may do more than is commanded, and conſequently be *better* upon the Whole, as well as in a ſingle Inſtance, than we are ſtrictly required to be; and conſequently again, we are not ſtrictly required to be *as good as poſſible*. Beſides, if it were not thus, it would follow, that there are no Degrees of Reward and Glory in Heaven, but that All are rewarded and glorified alike; which is contrary to Scripture. But alas! we need not inſiſt upon this: The Doctrine is *true*, but there is no Occaſion of inculcating it. Our corrupt Nature, God knows, wants a *Spur* in the Ways of Virtue, rather than a *Curb:* Not that what I have ſaid tends to curb it in thoſe Ways; but there may be, and is, a *Miſtake* even on *that* hand, to the diſquieting and perplexing of ſome pious Chriſtians: For which Reaſon I thought fit to ſay thus much of it, and need ſay no more. SERM. III.

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IT is further to be obſerved upon this great Subject, in the Caſe of *Repentance*, that ſome Actions being purely *tranſient*, all we can do is heartily to bewail and lament them, earneſtly to implore God's Pardon for them, and never more to repeat them. Of this Kind are far the greateſt Number: But then there are ſome others which are *permanent*, either in themſelves, or at leaſt in their Effects and Conſequences. And here we are obliged to do all which I juſt now mention'd, and much more; I mean, to *undo* what we have *done:* As, if we have defrauded, we muſt make Reſtitution; if we have drawn others into Sin, we muſt uſe all poſſible Means to draw them out of it. If we do not this to the utmoſt of our Power, it will be found, that our *Actions being weigh'd* in the Balance, our Guilt is heavy in the one Scale, and our Repentance in the other is lighter than Air, or rather in truth no Repentance at all.

THOUGH what I have hitherto ſaid relates to *Practice*, yet what relates to *Faith* is by no means excluded: Nay, in a wide Senſe it is included under Practice; Faith, as it belongs to the *Will*, being properly a *Virtue*,

Virtue, and its Oppoſite properly a *Vice*. In vain therefore do ſome among us flatter themſelves that they are *moral* Men, becauſe they live what is commonly call'd a *moral Life*, when at the ſame time they are *Infidels*. *Infidelity* in one born, baptiz'd, and educated in a Chriſtian Church, is *Immorality*, and even the worſt Sort of it. I obſerved, in the Beginning of this Diſcourſe, that under *Actions* in a wide Senſe *Thoughts* are comprehended: But beſides, theſe Men in conſequence of their Infidelity proceed to outward Actions. They act againſt God; act even *offenſively*, and declare a Kind of *War* againſt him: And they may depend upon it thoſe *Actions are weigh'd by Him*, whether they are by *themſelves* or no. Nor is it of any Avail to them, that they call the great Articles of our Faith *Points merely ſpeculative*: For, 1*ſt*, They are not ſo, but *practical too*. Or, 2*dly*, If it were as they ſay, yet theſe ſpeculative Points are not ſo light and airy as they either imagine, or contrary to their Knowledge affirm. But, by not being believ'd and aſſented to, when their divine Truth is ſo clearly proved, they will be found heavy enough to ſink impe-

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nitent Unbelievers into Hell, and add inſupportable Weight to their Damnation.

HITHERTO I have diſcuſſed this Subject as it relates to particular Things and Circumſtances; and have, in a ſummary and miſcellaneous, though, I hope, not immethodical Way, gone through a great Variety of Matter, a great Number of Particulars, with reference to our Actions conſider'd *ſingly in themſelves.* I ſhall now, at the Concluſion, briefly conſider them *in groſs*, upon the Whole, or with regard to our Courſe of Life, our ſpiritual State and Condition, taken all together. This, though grievouſly neglected by too many, is of the *utmoſt Importance*, and *abſolutely neceſſary.* A Man may be very exact in weighing, or meaſuring, this or that Thing, in adjuſting this or that Sum, and yet be utterly negligent in the general Account of his Gains or Loſſes, of his Fortune and Circumſtances, upon the Whole; and if he be, every body of common Prudence well knows what is like to be his Fate. And it is juſt the ſame in *Spirituals*, as in *Temporals.* It is loſt Labour to be very minute and exact in meaſuring, or balancing, theſe or thoſe particular Actions,

if

if we do not well weigh and examine our Lives in the main, according to the only true Rule, the *Law of God.* And the plain Account of the whole Matter is this: We are certainly in a *good State*, if we habitually practiſe all Virtues, as we have Opportunity and Power, and be in the Habit of no one Vice; and this, notwithſtanding the beſt of our Services be mingled with ſome Corruption, with Weakneſs and Infirmity; nay, though we fall into ſome wilful Sins, provided they be immediately repented of and reform'd: In a Word, if we make the general Principle of Virtue, *viz.* the Love of God, and a due Regard to his Legiſlative Authority, the controuling Principle of our Actions in general; and if we be truly *ſincere*, though we be not *perfect*; for the latter it is impoſſible we ſhould be, while we are in this World. And we are as certainly in a *bad State*, if we be in the Habit of any one Sin, though we be virtuous in all other Reſpects; and that too, though the Sin to which we are habituated (if it be wilful) be in its own Nature never ſo little; much more if we allow ourſelves in the Habits of many even little ones. For beſides that, admitting

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SERM. III. admitting they were inconſiderable in themſelves, ſingly and ſeparately taken, (which yet they are not, no wilful Sin in a practical and moral Senſe being ſmall, *i. e.* inconſiderable) yet many ſmall *Weights* put into the ſame *Scale* amount to a great one; nay, a certain Number of them will, and muſt, *turn the Balance* againſt a great one in the other *Scale*. In ſhort, we are in a *bad State*, if, with reſpect to *Time*, our Obedience, though for the time it be univerſal, be only by *Fits* and *Starts*; and if, with reſpect to its *Extent*, though as to *Time* it be never ſo conſtant, it be not *univerſal*, but only *partial*; and if we do not practiſe according to that moſt true, important, and never to be forgotten Maxim of St. *James*, *Whoſoever ſhall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, he is guilty of all.**

Now to God the Father, &c.

* James ii. 10.

SERMON

SERMON IV.

The *Perfection* of the Goſpel, and the *Imperfection* of the other Diſpenſations, with relation to MORALITY.

The *Firſt* Sermon on this Subject.

TIT. II. 11, 12.

The Grace of God, that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared unto all Men;

Teaching us, that denying Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World.

THESE Words are a very remarkable Portion of holy Scripture; foraſmuch as in them is compriſed the whole Scheme or Syſtem of *Chriſtian* *Mora-*

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Morality, our Duty to *God*, our *Neighbour*, and *Ourſelves*. By the *Grace of God* is here to be underſtood the *Goſpel of Chriſt*; which is called χάρις, *Grace*, upon this Ground, becauſe the Goſpel is Matter of mere Grace and Favour, of free undeſerved Mercy, to which the Sons of fallen *Adam* could lay no Claim in point of Right or Juſtice; and the Sending and Coming of *Chriſt* to reveal it was an Act of infinite *Charity* in God towards Mankind. The Truth of this Expoſition appears from many other Places of the New Teſtament, in which *Grace* ſignifies the *Goſpel:* Particularly *John* i. 17. *For the Law was given by Moſes, but Grace and Truth came by Jeſus Chriſt:* And *Rom.* vi. 14. *We are not under the Law, but under Grace.* In both which Texts it is plain, that by *Grace* is meant the *Goſpel* in Contradiſtinction to the Law of *Moſes*.

THIS *Goſpel* is ſaid to *bring Salvation*, or, more agreeably to the Words of the Original, to be *the ſaving Grace of God*, ἡ χάρις θεοῦ ἡ σωτήριος: Becauſe it propoſes the Conditions of everlaſting Happineſs, reveals Salvation to us, and diſcovers the Means of obtaining it. None but thoſe who are under

der the Goſpel-Covenant can lay any Claim to it, none but ſuch having any Right to the Promiſes of him who hath wrought *this great Salvation.* SERM. IV.

Hath appeared; ἐπιφάνη, *is manifeſted:* Becauſe all neceſſary Points contained in it are not ſhadow'd out by *Types* and *Figures*, not involved in *Allegory* and *Alluſion*; but are ſo plain, and mark'd out in ſuch legible Characters, that thoſe muſt wilfully ſhut their Eyes who will not have *the Light of the glorious Goſpel ſhine unto them.** Agreeably to that of St. *Peter: And hath brought Life and Immortality to Light through the Goſpel.* †

To all Men: Becauſe it is *univerſal*, and tender'd to all Mankind in general, to *Gentiles* as well as *Jews*; and is not confined to one particular People, as the *Moſaic* Oeconomy was.

THE *latter* Part of the Text I touch'd upon firſt of all; and the Whole, taken together, may admit of this ſhort and eaſy Paraphraſe. "The Goſpel of *Chriſt*, which "reveals Salvation, and propoſes the Means "of obtaining it, is offer'd to all Mankind "in

* 2 Cor. iv. 4. † 2 Pet. i. 10.

SERM. IV. "in general; teaching us, 1. *Negatively*, "that we ſhould not allow *ourſelves* in any "Impiety, nor in any *Filthineſs of Fleſh or* "*Spirit:* 2. *Poſitively*, that we ſhould do "all our Duty, to *God* by living *godly*, to "our *Neighbour* by living *righteouſly*, to "*Ourſelves* by living *ſoberly*, in this preſent "State of our Trial and Probation."

FROM the Words thus open'd I ſhall,

I. SHEW that *Chriſtianity* is a full and complete Syſtem of *Morality*, or practical Religion; and alſo give ſome Account, in that reſpect, of the *other* Diſpenſations.

II. SHEW that *Morality*, or practical Religion, is truly and properly divided into Duties towards *God*, our *Neighbour*, and *Ourſelves*.

III. MAKE ſuch Obſervations and Reflections as ſhall ſeem natural and material.

I. *Chriſtianity* is a full and complete Syſtem of *Morality*, or practical Religion. I ſay, *Morality:* For though the Word has been

been abuſed to ill Purpoſes, yet that is no Argument againſt the Uſe of it. *Morality* it is, though not *mere* Morality, the Grace of God's Holy Spirit being ſuperadded. The *Goſpel* is a Scheme of the higheſt and beſt Ethics; but ſtill *Ethics* they are, and deſerve that Name much better than *Ariſtotle*'s, or any other whatſoever. The Perfection of this Syſtem is expreſsly aſſerted in ſome Texts of Scripture, and implied in others. Our Bleſſed Saviour aſſures us, *that he came not to deſtroy the Law, but to fulfil it.** This is true even of the *Ceremonial* Law: For though an End was put to it by his Diſpenſation, yet that was rather by way of *Completion*, than *Abolition*; as all Types and Shadows muſt of courſe ceaſe, when the Things typified are come to paſs: Even this therefore was not ſo properly *deſtroy'd* by him, as *fulfill'd*. But as his Words relate to the *Moral* Law, (for of that too, and of that chiefly, they are underſtood by Interpreters) they muſt mean that he came to *fulfil* it, *i. e.* to *fill it up*, to improve, explain, and enforce it, and ſupply whatever was deficient in it. If therefore he found

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* Matth. v. 17.

SERM. IV. the Law in any meaſure defective, he left it *perfect and entire, and wanting nothing.* This likewiſe appears from the Words of St. *James*, who ſtiles the Goſpel *the perfect Law of Liberty.**

AND indeed the Appearance of *the Son of God in the Fleſh* was ſo wonderful and amazing a Condeſcenſion, that it cannot be conceived he ſhould come from Heaven to eſtabliſh a Religion, which ſhould, after all, require any Supplement or Addition, or be otherwiſe than in all Reſpects abſolutely perfect. His Diſpenſation muſt be the *laſt*, becauſe there can be none greater to ſucceed it; and if the *laſt*, his Body of Laws muſt be *entire*; it being unimaginable but that God, ſince he has in ſeveral Ages made ſeveral Manifeſtations of his Will, ſhould ſome Time or other give the World a complete Code or Digeſt of Morality. If it be ſaid, He had given ſuch a one before our Saviour's Incarnation and Preaching; I anſwer at preſent, Be it ſo: *His* Law, however, is complete; ſince, by explaining and enforcing them, he made all preceding Laws his own.

THIS

* James i. 25.

THIS will further appear, if we make a particular and minute Enquiry into the preceptive Part of the Goſpel. It will be granted, that a Thing is *perfect*, when *nothing* is *wanting* to it: And let any one weigh the Chriſtian Religion in his Mind, and run over all the Duties contained in it; and then let him tell what is *wanting*. There are Precepts for our Behaviour in all the different Relations we can be under: And upon Examination it will be found, that *one Jot or Tittle* can no more be *added* to the Goſpel, or Law of *Chriſt*, than it can be *taken away*. SERM. IV.

As to other Religions, the Heathen, who were guided only by the Law of *Nature* greatly blotted and obſcured, rather *believ'd* (for they were far from being *ſure*) that there is a God, and that he ought to be worſhipped. But then their *Notions* of a Deity being dark and erroneous, it was natural that their *Precepts* concerning his Worſhip, and other Duties relating to him, ſhould be ſo likewiſe: And accordingly their *Fear* and *Reverence* was turn'd into *Superſtition*, and their *Devotion* into *Idolatry*. For the reſt, there are, it muſt be own'd,

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in their Treatiſes of *Morality*, many excellent Things, though many contrary to right Reaſon, as well as to true Religion. At beſt, though they recommended ſome Virtues, and condemn'd and forbad ſome Vices, yet thoſe Virtues were generally look'd upon either only as *requiſite* and *convenient*, with reſpect to human Prudence, and our Well-being in this World; or elſe as *fine Accompliſhments* and *ſhining Qualities*, not as *Duties* neceſſarily required: And little Regard was had to Rewards and Puniſhments, by reaſon of their doubtful and confuſed Notions about a future State. Thus for *Natural Religion*, as corrupted by the Ignorance and Wickedneſs of the World.

As to *Revealed*, we have very little Account in Scripture of particular moral Precepts given by *direct*, *immediate*, *particular* Revelations, to the Ancients under the Patriarchal Oeconomy. The Law of *Moſes* ſucceeds that Diſpenſation, as the Goſpel does the Law of *Moſes*. With reference to theſe two *laſt*, (in ſpeaking of which we ſhall occaſionally ſay a few Words of the Law of *Nature* likewiſe) it has been very largely and variouſly controverted, whether our

our Bleſſed Saviour added any new Precepts to the Moral Law of *Moſes*, or only explain'd, vindicated, and reinforced it; and whether that Oppoſition which he makes between his own Doctrine, and that which he compares with it, when he ſays, * *Ye have heard that it was ſaid by them of old time*, &c. *but I ſay unto you*, &c. be to be underſtood of the Law as deliver'd by *Moſes*, or as corrupted by the falſe Gloſſes, Interpolations, and ſpurious Additions of the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*. However this Matter is to be determined, I take notice in the firſt Place, that with regard to our *Practice*, it is not very material which of theſe Opinions we ſubſcribe to; ſince we are ſure that all thoſe which are called *Goſpel-Precepts* are *ſomewhere* clearly deliver'd, and have the undoubted Stamp of Divine Authority upon them. If they are not contained in the *Old* Teſtament, they certainly are in the *New*: And that is enough for our Purpoſe. This neceſſary Caution being given, I obſerve that the two different Opinions, when clearly ſtated and explained, amount perhaps to much the ſame

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* Matth. v. 27, &c.

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ſame Thing, and are not ſo different as they are imagined to be by thoſe who ſeverally maintain them. For as on the one hand, nobody, I think, will deny that the *general Scheme* of Duty was always the ſame; ſo on the other, who will ſay that the Law of *Moſes* is not more particular and minute than the Law of *Nature*, and the Law of *Chriſt* than that of *Moſes?* For the fuller adjuſting of this great Point, which I have no where ſeen ſufficiently cleared, what is reaſonably to be offer'd may, I think, be reſolved into the following Propoſitions.

1*ſt*, WHATEVER Diſpenſations, or Methods of Conveyance, the Divine Wiſdom has made uſe of in the ſeveral Ages of the World; and however he has *expreſsly*, and *in direct Words*, commanded and forbidden more or fewer Things under thoſe different Diſpenſations; the *general Scheme* of Duty and Obedience, as to *the main*, was ever the ſame, and will ever continue to be ſo; according to the *eternal Reaſon* and *Nature* of Things, (*depending upon God* the *Author* of *Nature*) and the *general Relations* between the Creator and his Creatures, between Men and Men, between Reaſon and Appe-

Appetite, Fleſh and Spirit, Body and Soul, which are *fix'd* and *unchangeable*. SERM. IV.

2*dly*, THE Moral Law of *Moſes* (at leaſt as far as appears to Us) was more *explicit* and *particular*, than *any preceding* one, whether natural or revealed.

3*dly*, THE Law of *Chriſt* is more ſo, than the Law of *Moſes*. If the laſt-mention'd does virtually contain all moral Precepts, as indeed it does, (and ſo does the Law of *Nature* too, in its original Purity and Simplicity;) yet certainly the Goſpel is much more explicit and particular. The *former* inſiſts chiefly upon *overt Acts*, and the outward Performance or Violation of its Commands; not ſo much upon the *Thoughts* and Intentions of the *Heart*. The Duties it *expreſsly* enjoins relate chiefly to *God* and our *Neighbour*, but thoſe which reſpect *Ourſelves* are not ſo diſtinctly laid down. If all the Duties required of us *Chriſtians* be reducible to the *Decalogue* or *Ten Commandments*, or indeed to the Law of *Moſes* at large, it is evident they cannot be ſo reduced without long Deductions of Reaſon and Argument, not to ſay without ſome Force and Violence. The Goſpel in very

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very many Places, and in the plaineſt Words, tells us that we muſt forgive and love our Enemies, have an extenſive Charity for all Mankind; be meek, humble, patient, and *poor in Spirit*; work up our Souls to a heavenly Frame and Temper, deſpiſe the World with all the Wealth and Glory of it, and keep a ſtrict Guard upon our *Thoughts*, as well as upon our *Words* and *Actions*. Are theſe Things as full, clear, and expreſs in the Law of *Moſes*, or in any Part of the *Old* Teſtament, as in the *New*? Nobody will ſay ſo.

4*thly*, THOUGH *one* great Deſign of our Bleſſed Saviour's Sermon upon the Mount was undoubtedly to *purge* and *vindicate* the Moral Law of *Moſes* from the *Corruptions* and *ſpurious Additions* of the *Jewiſh* Doctors, yet there is no Reaſon to affirm that it was his *only* Deſign. In ſome Things ſure he *improved* the *Moral Law itſelf*, with reſpect to its *Precepts:* For to make it more full, clear, and explicit, (as we have, under the foregoing Head, ſeen he *did* make it) to heighten and refine it, to draw Generals out into Particulars, to ſet the Lines of Duty in a ſtronger Light, and *expreſsly ſpeak* what

was

was before but *covertly implied*, is beyond Controverſy an *Improvement*. It is like filling up the *Out-Lines* and *dead Colourings* of a *Picture*, and adding *Life* and *Spirit* to the whole Piece. Accordingly, thoſe Words, *Ye have heard that it hath been ſaid* by *them* (or, as it ſhould rather be render'd, *to* them) *of old time*, &c. ſometimes relate to the *Rabbinical* Comments and Interpolations, ſometimes to the Moral Law *itſelf*: So that the Queſtion, whether they relate to the *former* or the *latter*, cannot be *univerſally* affirmed or denied of *either*. And whereas ſome, who underſtand them wholly and ſolely of the firſt-mentioned, have obſerv'd that the Words are not, *It hath been ſaid*, but *Ye have heard that it hath been ſaid*, i. e. You have been *told* by the *Scribes* and *Phariſees* that *Moſes* ſaid ſo, when in truth he did not; I anſwer, 1*ſt*, That *Moſes* did not ſay ſo, is true of *ſome* of the Paſſages, but not of *all*, no nor of the *greateſt Part*: Which indeed is the Reaſon of my Poſition above, that the Words ſometimes refer to the *Rabbins*, and ſometimes to *Moſes* himſelf. Some of thoſe pretended Precepts, I confeſs, are not in the Moral Law, but are mere

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mere Inventions of the *Jewiſh* Doctors in their traditionary Way. As *ver.* 43. *Thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour, and hate thine Enemy*; the latter Part is a ſpurious Addition; there are no ſuch Words in the Old Teſtament; any more than thoſe at *ver.* 21. *And whoſoever ſhall be in Danger of the Judgment.* But then on the other hand, *ver.* 27. *Ye have heard that it hath been ſaid to them of old time, Thou ſhalt not commit Adultery.* Sure *this* is in the Moral Law; nor is here the Addition of any *Rabbinical* Gloſs or Comment upon it. And does our Saviour make no Improvement of it, when he adds in the next Words, *But I ſay unto you, that whoſoever looketh on a Woman to luſt after her hath committed Adultery with her already in his Heart?* Again, *ver.* 33. *Ye have heard that it hath been ſaid,* &c. *Thou ſhalt not forſwear thyſelf, but ſhalt perform unto the Lord thine Oaths.* The Senſe, though not the very Words, we have *Levit.* xix. 12. *And ye ſhall not ſwear by my Name falſly, neither ſhalt thou profane the Name of thy God. I am the Lord.* Our Saviour adds, *But I ſay unto you, Swear not at all,* i. e. in common Diſcourſe, or Converſation, as appears from the

the Context. Laſtly, *ver.* 38. *An Eye for an Eye, and a Tooth for a Tooth:* It is exactly ſo, *Exod.* xxi. 24. *Levit.* xxiv. 20. This indeed rather belongs to the *Judicial* Law; but it was plainly *permitted* at leaſt by the *Moral.* Our Saviour adds, *But I ſay unto you that ye reſiſt not Evil*, &c. I anſwer, 2*dly*, In one Place he alters his Phraſe; *ver.* 31. It is not, *You have heard that it has been ſaid*, but directly, *It has been ſaid, Whoſoever ſhall put away his Wife, let him give her a Writing of Divorcement.* This, upon the Account of the *Hardneſs of their Hearts*, as he elſewhere * aſſures us, was a permiſſive Law under the *Jewiſh* Oeconomy; but it is cancelled and repealed under the *Chriſtian. But I ſay unto you*, (ſubjoins our Saviour) *that whoſoever ſhall put away his Wife*, &c. and ſo on to the End of the Verſe. SERM. IV.

HERE, I am ſenſible, the following Queſtion may be aſk'd; and it ſeems a material one, and not eaſy to be ſolved. Since the *general Scheme* of *Duty*, depending upon the *general Relations*, was *always the ſame*, why did not God *at firſt* give as *particular* and

* Matth. xix. 8.

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and *explicit* Laws, as he has done *ſince*; and why ſhould the World for *ſo many Ages* want a Religion, which, in reſpect of its *moral* Precepts, ſhould be incapable of any Improvement? After having obſerved, that if we could give no Account of this Matter, no Solution of the Difficulty alledged, *that* would be no reaſonable Objection againſt our Religion as we now have it; that God has a Reaſon for all his Proceedings, whether we can aſſign one or no; and that it is the Height of impious Preſumption in Us to cenſure infinite Wiſdom, though we cannot account for all the Steps it takes, in the *Moral*, as well as in the *Natural* World: I ſay, having premiſed theſe neceſſary Cautions, I anſwer to the Queſtion *directly*, that the Wiſdom of God is diſplay'd by *Diverſity* or *Variety*, by a *Scale* of Beings more and leſs perfect, and *ſubordinate* to one another. It has been his Method to proceed gradually with his Diſpenſations in *other* Reſpects: Why ſhould it not be ſo in *this*? Nor is there any thing incongruous in his impoſing *more*, *greater*, and *higher* Duties upon thoſe of the *laſt* Days, than upon thoſe of the *preceding*; or in being more *full*, *particular*,

ticular, and *explicit* in his Precepts and Commands to *Some* than to *Others*; the Rewards and Puniſhments being always proportion'd, according as the Light afforded is greater or leſs, the Duties to be perform'd more or leſs laborious, and the like. They who find fault with this may as well alledge, that it is incongruous for a Maſter of a Family to appoint one Servant a more eaſy, another a more difficult Taſk; or to place ſome of them in a lower Claſs, and others in a higher. If it be ſaid, the Caſes are not parallel; becauſe *God* always does that which is moſt perfect, which cannot be affirmed of *Men:* I anſwer, It is the moſt perfect Method of proceeding, to make different Orders and Degrees of Things and Perſons, and that not only in *different* Species, but in the *ſame* Species. At leaſt it is ſo, as far as we know: And *that* (if there were no more) is a ſufficient Anſwer to the Objection. Let the Objectors (for, according to the Laws of Arguing, the Burden of Proving lies upon *them)* prove the contrary, if they can.

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SERMON V.

The *Perfection* of the Goſpel, and the *Imperfection* of the other Diſpenſations, with relation to MORALITY.

The *Second* Sermon on this Subject.

TIT. II. 11, 12.

The Grace of God, that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared unto all Men;

Teaching us, that denying Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World.

HAVING thus, under my *Firſt* general Head, ſhewn that *Chriſtianity* is a *full* and *complete* Syſtem of *Morality*, or *practical Religion*; and alſo SERM. V.

SERM. V. given ſome Account, in that Reſpect, of the *other Diſpenſations*; I proceed to ſhew, under my *Second*,

II. THAT *Morality*, or *practical Religion*, is truly and properly divided into Duties towards *God*, our *Neighbour*, and *Ourſelves*. All *moral* Actions, *as ſuch*, or *all* Actions, ſo far as they have any *Virtue* or *Vice* in them, and are capable of *Praiſe* or *Blame*, of *Reward* or *Puniſhment*, muſt neceſſarily relate either to the *Supreme* and *Infinite Being*, from whom we are, and on whom we depend; and who upon that Account has an undoubted *Right* to exact Gratitude, Adoration, and Obedience from us: Or elſe to thoſe of *our own Species*, with whom we are continually converſant, who, by reaſon of their partaking of the ſame Nature, have a cloſe and intimate Relation to us, and are capable of being aſſiſted or injured by us: Or, *laſtly*, to *our own ſelves*, ſo far as the Faculties of our Souls and Bodies are capable of being regulated and govern'd, and obeying the Dictates of Reaſon or Religion. Theſe *three* are the only general Objects to which *moral* Actions have any Rela-

Relation; nor can any other be poſſibly imagined: And ſince all religious *Precepts* are deſigned to regulate and direct thoſe *Actions*, it follows that the Diviſion of the *former* muſt neceſſarily depend upon the Diviſion of the *latter*. SERM. V.

CONCERNING the Duties which relate to *God*, there is no Difficulty worth taking notice of in the Nature of them. But in thoſe which reſpect our *Neighbours*, it may be requiſite briefly to obſerve, that the Word *Neighbour* is not here taken in that vulgar Senſe which is commonly appropriated to it: For by it we are not to underſtand only thoſe with whom we are more immediately and particularly converſant or acquainted, nor only thoſe who are our Equals, and upon the ſame Level of Fortune with ourſelves; but by a Man's *Neighbours* is here meant *every body* but *himſelf*: So that the Duty of general Charity to *all Mankind*, Love to one's *Country*, Obedience to *Governors*, Honour to *Parents*, Care of *Children*, and the like, are all comprehended under this Head. As for the Duties to *Ourſelves*, they are not call'd ſo in this Senſe, as if we were the Perſons who properly ex-

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act them of ourſelves, and ſo had a Power to remit them, or diſpenſe with them: But they have that Name given to them, becauſe in the Exerciſe of them they do not immediately relate to *God* or our *Neighbour*, but to *our own* Powers and Faculties, which are capable of Government and Regulation. A Man's *Self* is the Object about which they are exerciſed; but the Obligation of performing them is to *God*, and *He* it is who is diſobey'd by the Breach or Violation of them.

INDEED *all* Duties are in one Senſe Duties towards *God*, *i. e.* with reference to his Right of ſupreme Legiſlature, by virtue of the abſolute Sovereignty and Dominion which he has over us; but they differ from one another, and are divided into thoſe three diſtinct *Claſſes* above-mentioned by the the three different Sorts of *Objects* about which they are exerciſed. But they are all Duties towards *Him*, inaſmuch as the Obligation of them depends upon *his* Authority, and *his* Laws are broken or kept, whenever any of theſe Duties are violated or perform'd.

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AND even with regard to their *Objects* they are not ſo nicely diſtinguiſh'd, but that ſome of them are of a *mix'd* Nature, and relate partly to our *Neighbour*, and partly to *Ourſelves*. The Virtue of matrimonial *Chaſtity*, and its Oppoſite the Sin of *Adultery*; the Virtue of *Humility*, and the Sin of *Pride*, are of this Nature; with ſome others which we need not mention.

BEFORE we diſmiſs this Head, it may not be improper, nor altogether foreign to our Purpoſe, to add ſome ſhort and general Reflections upon the *Reaſonableneſs* and *Excellency* of theſe three Sorts of Duties reſpectively. And *firſt*, there can nothing certainly be more congruous and rational, than that the publick and private Worſhip of the God who made us ſhould be kept up in the World, and every where punctually obſerved; that He who is of infinite *Majeſty* ſhould be devoutly *adored*; that He who is of infinite *Excellencies* and *Perfections* ſhould be awfully *admired*; that He who is of infinite *Power* and *Dominion* ſhould be reverentially *fear'd*; that He ſhould be *lov'd* and *depended upon* for his infinite *Goodneſs* and *Wiſdom*, *believed* for his infinite *Know-*

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ledge and *Veracity*, and entirely *obey'd* for his infinite *Authority*. The *Equitableneſs* of theſe Duties is ſo plain and obvious, that it has been perceived and acknowledged in all *Ages*, and by all *Nations*; inſomuch that the very Word *Religion* was long uſed for nothing elſe but the *Worſhip* of the Deity, or that Service which is to be paid to the Supreme Being. Then for the *ſecond* Rank or Order of Duties, thoſe which relate to our *Neighbours*, the good Effects of them are ſo very great and conſiderable, that the Peace and Regularity of the World, and the very Being of Government and Society, cannot ſubſiſt without them. Were not Men ſenſible of the mutual Tie and Relation which they have one to another, the Subordination of Inferiors to Superiors, and the like; there would be no Aid and Aſſiſtance given or expected, none who would be *willing* to be *governed*, and conſequently none who would be *able* to *govern*. *Laſtly*, The Duties to *Ourſelves* (if rightly and duly performed) have that happy Influence upon us, that they keep our *Bodies* in Health, Strength, and Vigour, increaſe and better our *Fortunes*; and (which is above all to be

deſired)

deſired) they reduce our *Souls* to a heavenly Frame and Temper, to the *Holineſs* of *Saints*, the *Reſignation* of *Martyrs*, and the *Purity* of *Angels*. SERM. V.

III. I COME now, in the *Third* and *Laſt* Place, to make ſome Obſervations, or Reflections, upon what has been ſaid.

1. AND the *firſt* is *this*: That as our *Religion* is *complete* and *perfect* in reſpect of its moral Precepts, ſo ought our *Obedience* to be *univerſal*; and we are as indiſpenſably obliged to perform the *Whole* of our Duty, as we are to perform any one *Part* or *Branch* of it. There are few but think it juſt and reaſonable that there ſhould be ſuch a Thing as the Practice of Virtue, and a Service paid to the Supreme Being: But there are not near ſo many as there ſhould be, who care to go through the *whole* Courſe of Obedience. They think they ſhall do *well enough*, if they are but *religious in the main*, (as they erroneouſly ſpeak) and that God will not be offended with them for the Breach of *one*, or *two*, or *three* of his Laws, provided they are punctual in the Obſervance of the *reſt*. But St. *James* aſ-

ſures

SERM. V. ſures us, that *whoſoever ſhall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, he is guilty of all.** And plain it is, both from Reaſon and Scripture, that *Obedience* to one of God's Commands will not bring us *to* Heaven; but habitual *Diſobedience* to any one of them will exclude us *from* it.

2*dly*, WE are upon this Subject carefully to guard againſt two *Extremes*, as contrary to the Truth, as they are to one another. The *firſt* is of thoſe who imagine that upon *Chriſtian* Principles we ought to ſet aſide *Reaſon* and the Law of *Nature*, nay, and the Moral Law of *Moſes* itſelf: The *other* is of thoſe who plead ſtrongly for the Sufficiency of mere *natural* Reaſon, without any *Revelation* at all. As to the *former*, the ſeveral Diſpenſations we have mention'd, and the Precepts contained under them, are not deſtructive of each other; nor do the *ſubſequent* cancel or diſſolve the Obligation of the *preceding*. The Moral Law of *Moſes* is not ſuperſeded by the Law of *Chriſt*, nor the Law of *Nature* by *either*. On the contrary, they are built upon, and perfective of, one another; and all the Duties con-

* James ii. 10.

contained under each of them are of *neceſſary* and *eternal* Obligation. This, I ſay, is to be obſerved by thoſe ill-inſtructed *Chriſtians*, who, out of a miſtaken Notion of *Faith* and *Grace*, look upon the Morality of the beſt ancient Heathen, and of the ancient Patriarchs in the Old Teſtament, to be now aboliſh'd, and the *Moral* as well as *Ceremonial* Parts of the *Moſaic* Law to be done away, *as weak and beggarly Elements*: As if the *Improvement* had deſtroy'd the Thing *improved*, and *Natural* Religion were extinguiſh'd by *Revealed*. I ſay no more of *this* Extreme, becauſe it is an Enthuſiaſtical or Fanatical Error, and is now pretty well out-dated. But the *other* muſt be a little more particularly conſider'd, becauſe it is the faſhionable Folly and Vice of *theſe* Times; in which there is much more Danger from *Infidelity*, than from *Enthuſiaſm*. SERM. V.

THE Law of *Nature*, or *Reaſon*, they tell us is ſufficient: But what do they *mean* by the *Law* of *Nature*, or *Reaſon*? And then again, *ſufficient*: Sufficient! *how*? and *for what*? It will be requiſite to examine theſe Words of theirs ſomewhat diſtinctly: For all their *Strength* (which, in truth, will be

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be found to be mere *Weakneſs)* lies in the perplex'd and puzzling Work they make with the indeterminate Signification of thoſe Sounds and Phraſes. Do they mean the *Law* of *Reaſon* and *Nature* as it was *originally* given by the *Author* of *Nature*, in its *primitive* Purity and Integrity? If they do, I anſwer, 1*ſt*, They talk about that which is not now *in Being*, and ſo talk moſt *impertinently*. 2*dly*, *How*, and *how far*, was even *that* ſufficient? It appears from Scripture, and the conſtant Doctrine of the Primitive Church, that our firſt Parents in the State of Innocence had the ſupernatural Aſſiſtance of Divine Grace ſuperadded to their natural Reaſon, enabling them to obey the Law of *Nature* itſelf, and whatever other Laws were preſcribed to them. I ſay *other* Laws; for we have an Acount in Scripture of *one* Law given by *Revelation* even to *them*; and there might be *more* ſuch, for any thing we know. Farther we cannot determine concerning the Sufficiency of *their* Reaſon, and the Law of Nature as it *then* ſtood; becauſe God only knows how clear, how full, how particular it might be, and to what a Degree the Mind of Man, before the

the Fall, might be enlighten'd. Only let our ſagacious Diſcoverers take this along with them, that, for any thing they can prove to the contrary, what they call *Natural* Religion was in part *Revealed* Religion, as I intimated before. SERM. V.

OR, 2*dly*, Do they mean the Law of Nature and Reaſon, as it is *blotted* and *obſcured*, *weaken'd* and *impair'd*, *corrupted* and *depraved*, by the Follies and Vices of *Men*? If ſo, *how*, and *for what*, is that *ſufficient*? To direct Men ſo far as its Power reaches? This is to ſay, it is ſufficient ſo far as it is ſufficient; which is ſaying juſt nothing. And what a wretched *inſufficient* Sufficiency this is, abundantly appears from the Principles and Practices of the Heathen, even the wiſeſt and beſt among them. However, were *Reaſon* much more ſufficient than it is, certainly *Revelation* improves it, and adds ſomething to it: *Reaſon* and *Revelation* in *Conjunction* are much better than *Reaſon alone*. Will any one in his Senſes affirm, that the Law of *Nature* even in its *beſt* State (how much leſs when it is thus *corrupted*?) is as *full*, *clear*, *particular*, and *expreſs* in its moral Precepts, as the Law of *Chriſt*?

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Chriſt? The *Goſpel* therefore, to put it at the loweſt, is not *needleſs* or *uſeleſs:* And yet to perſuade Mankind that it is ſo, is manifeſtly the Deſign which theſe unreaſonable and wicked Men are driving at. If they ſay we wrong them, I aſk them, Do they *believe* the Religion we profeſs to be revealed by God, or do they *not?* If the *latter*, why do they not anſwer the Arguments by which we pretend at leaſt to have fully demonſtrated its divine Original, from as plain *Matters of Fact* as any in Being? If the *former*, why do they not declare for *Chriſtianity?* Why, on the contrary, do they *fight againſt God* by taking ſo much Pains to vilify and calumniate it, to *ſet it at nought*, and make it perfectly *uſeleſs?* And moreover, if Chriſtianity be *Divine*; if the Bible be *the Word of God*, and contains his revealed Will; how can it be *ſuperfluous?* And if it be not *ſuperfluous*, how can mere *Reaſon* be *ſufficient?* Can God do any thing in vain? Eſpecially ſuch wonderful Works as eſtabliſh'd the Truth of the Old and New Teſtament? Were ſupernatural Inſpirations given, ſo many Miracles wrought, and the Frame of Nature ſo often

put

put out of Order, by infinite Power and Wiſdom, and all this for *nothing?* SERM. V.

UPON which ever Foot we put it, whether they ſay they *do*, or do *not* believe any thing of Revealed Religion; it is the hardeſt Matter in the World to make Senſe of their Reaſoning, or imagine how they come to put Words together in ſo ſtrange a Manner. *Chriſtianity as old as the Creation: Almoſt* as old, if they pleaſe, but not *quite*. It certainly began in Paradiſe, immediately after the Fall; I mean in that Promiſe, *The Seed of the Woman ſhall bruiſe the Serpent's Head.** But what if it were *quite* as old? Is it therefore *ſuperfluous?* I mean as to its *Precepts*; for as it is an Act of Grace, Mercy, and Favour, and a New Covenant, it is impoſſible it ſhould be ſo old: Becauſe there could be no ſuch Thing till Man had ſinn'd and fallen. *Or the Goſpel a Republication of the Religion of Nature.* Be it ſo, as to *Morality*, and meaning the original *pure* Religion of Nature; yet is that *All* that is in the Goſpel? Does the *Redemption of Mankind*, the Benefit of *Repentance*, *Reconciliation* with an *offended God*, and the *For-*

* Gen. iii. 15.

SERM. V. *Forgiveneſs of Sins*, go for nothing? Beſides, as to *Morality* itſelf; is not the Goſpel an *Addition to* Natural Religion, as well as the *Republication of* it? I think I have ſhewn that it is. But however, ſuppoſe it were *not*, though nothing can be more falſe; a *Republication*, it ſeems, it is *of the Law of Nature:* Why then do theſe Men take ſo much Pains to *ruin* it? They, if we may believe them, are very zealous for *Natural Religion:* Whence then their Quarrel againſt that which they ſay is the *Republication* of it? Is not a Law declaratory of a good Law a very good Thing itſelf? The Myſtery of the whole Matter is, in ſhort, *this*. Under the Shelter of a few ridiculous fantaſtical Words and Phraſes, which they themſelves do not in the leaſt underſtand, and which are thrown out only to amuſe and confound ignorant Readers, their Deſign is to deſtroy *Revealed* Religion, and *Natural* Religion too; well knowing how much the laſt-mentioned is ſupported by the other. *Natural* Religion indeed they are pleaſed to compliment in outward Appearance; but 'tis only in order to vilify *Revealed*, that they may effectually ruin *both*. They cry up

up *Morality* with a ſeeming Zeal: But ſince at the ſame time they expreſs the utmoſt Spite and Malice againſt *Chriſtianity*, I aſk them once more, Where do they meet with better *Morality* than in the *Bible?* Or rather, where is there any ſo good? I appeal to all who know any thing of theſe Matters, whether they are not from their Hearts entirely ſatisfied, that the Quarrel of theſe Infidels againſt the *Bible* proceeds from *hence*, that there is *too much Morality* in it; *more* than they *care for*, *more* than they ever intend to *practiſe*. The clear Sun-ſhine of the Goſpel offends their Eyes, becauſe they are reſolved not to be guided by it, and becauſe it diſcovers their Vices and Corruptions, which they are reſolved not to forſake: And ſo in Oppoſition to Divine Revelation, the Brightneſs of which flaſhes in their Faces, they light a Candle to the Sun, ſet up the dim Taper, the faint Glimmering of mere human, corrupted, depraved Reaſon; which in compariſon of the other is but Darkneſs. *And this is the Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, and Men love Darkneſs rather than Light, becauſe their Deeds are evil.* John iii. 19. SERM. V.

SERMON VI.

The great Rule of Doing as we would be done by.

MATTH. VII. 12.

All Things whatſoever ye would that Men ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo to them: For this is the Law and the Prophets.

A GOLDEN Rule! Admired by the *Heathen* themſelves; particularly by the Emperor *Severus*, who is ſaid to have honour'd *Chriſt* and *Chriſtianity* upon the Account of this Precept. How common it is in the Mouths of *Chriſtians*, every body knows: And yet it is by no means ſo much *practiſed* as it ought to be; no, nor ſo well *underſtood*: For,

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SERM. VI. For, as eaſy and obvious as it may ſeem, it requires Explication; there being not only *Difficulties*, but *Errors*, concerning it. I ſhall therefore,

I. FIRST, ſtate the *Nature* of this Duty of *Doing as we would be done by*, and alſo briefly ſhew the *Equitableneſs* of the *Reaſons* upon which it is founded. *All Things whatſoever ye would that Men ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo to them.*

II. SECONDLY, I ſhall conſider the great *Extent* of this Precept, and the comprehenſive Uſe we are to make of it in the *whole Courſe* of our Behaviour towards others. *For this is the Law and the Prophets.*

I. As to the *former* of theſe Heads; to proceed clearly, I ſhall firſt remove ſome Difficulties or Miſconceptions relating to this Rule; and then lay down the Rule itſelf, applying ſome particular Parts of it to the *farther* clearing and removing of thoſe Difficulties: Or, in other Words, I ſhall ſtate this Duty *negatively*, by ſhewing what

what it does *not* imply; and *positively*, by shewing what it *does*; together with the *Reasons* of *both*. It is too plain to need any Discussion, that this Rule cannot be so understood as to *confound* the *Relations* and *Distinctions* of Men; so that the *Father*, for Example, should reverence and obey the *Son*, because he expects the Son should reverence and obey *him*: This being contrary to common Sense, and the Nature of Things. But the Meaning is this: We should do to others as we would have them do to us, were *we in their Case*. To proceed therefore. SERM. VI.

SHOULD a *Criminal* condemn'd to *Punishment* expostulate with the *Magistrate*, "How "can you in Justice treat me thus? Were "you in my Case, would you be willing "to be so treated yourself?" The Answer is ready: 1*st*, It is not properly the *Magistrate* who does it, but the *Laws* of the Land: He is only an *Instrument*, as acting in a *publick*, not in a *private*, Capacity. What then, it will be said, Has this Rule nothing to do with publick Affairs? And ought not Legislators, in the making of Laws, to proceed at least according to the

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Equity of this Maxim? Doubtleſs, they ought; and therefore the Magiſtrate anſwers the condemn'd Criminal, 2*dly*, Were I in *your* Place, my *Will* and *Paſſions* would not approve of the Treatment againſt which you object, any more than yours do; but my *Judgment* and *Reaſon* would, and ſo ſhould yours: I ſhould acknowledge the Thing *ought* to be done, and that too, not only now the Law *is made*, but moreover that it was fit the Law *ſhould* be made; becauſe it promotes the publick Good, which in Juſtice and Equity is ever to be preferr'd before private. But then for private Life itſelf, to which this Precept is more immediately and directly applicable; a good Father, *as ſuch*, corrects or puniſhes his Son: If by the Son in his own Perſon, or by ſomebody elſe for him, the Objection be made as before, the ſame Anſwer, in effect, is to be given as before. If he be come to the Uſe of Reaſon, and make a true Uſe of it, his *Judgment* muſt approve of the Father's Proceeding, though his *Will* and *Paſſions* do not. If he be *not* come to the Uſe of Reaſon, the Queſtion is nothing: It is ſufficient to alledge that the Thing is *intended*

tended for his *Good*, and ought to be done. Were the Father in the Place of the Child, to be ſure he would not like it in any Reſpect: But that is of no Force, becauſe he would then be incapable of judging about it. And the ſame is to be ſaid of *Lunaticks* and *Idiots*. SERM. VI.

AGAIN, The *fraudulent Dealer* may flatter himſelf, that though (barring the Caſe of downright *Robbery*) he gets all he *can*, and by all the *Means* that he can deviſe, yet he breaks not this Command of our Saviour; becauſe *others* are at Liberty to do *the ſame* by *him*, and if they do, he ſhall not complain or blame them, but be very well content, and think *they* act as wiſely and juſtly as *he* does. But, 1*ſt*, Does he make this Profeſſion *publickly*, and take care that the World ſhould *know* it? Certainly not; becauſe, if he did, he would not be *truſted*, and conſequently could not find his Account, but would defeat his own Deſign. This therefore is only a ſophiſtical Pretence, by which he cheats *himſelf*, that he may more ſecurely cheat *others*. 2*dly*, Suppoſing it were *known*; ſtill he intends and endeavours to *get ſomething*, *upon the Whole*, by his

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Neighbour's Loſs; otherwiſe he would not act as he does: And would he be ſerved ſo *himſelf?* No Man, in his Senſes, is *willing* to be *injured:* And that is really the Caſe here, by whatever *Names* it may be called. If you make your Neighbour *loſe*, you may *gain* by *him*, but he is certainly *injured* by *you.*

FURTHER, as to the Caſe of *Adultery* and *Fornication:* The debauch'd Libertine may ſay, as many a one has ſaid, that 'tis true he is very free with ſuch a one's Family in that Reſpect; but I do not tranſgreſs the great Law of Equity, becauſe he, or any body elſe, may, with my good Liking, be as free with mine. To ſuch a *Profligate* I anſwer, 1*ſt*, He offends againſt *other* Laws of God, if not againſt *this* which we are now conſidering. But, 2*dly*, He offends even againſt *this.* He muſt, in his Thoughts, put *himſelf* into the *Place* of *thoſe Perſons* towards whom he thus behaves: *That* is the *real Meaning* of the Precept: And *they* may not be willing to be ſo *dealt with*, whatever *he* may be; nor be willing to *do* the ſame by *him*, as knowing it to be unlawful and deteſtable; (notwithſtanding

ſtanding his Permiſſion, or even Deſire) and ſo abhorring the Thoughts of either *receiving* or *giving* ſuch Treatment. Nay, 3*dly*, Though in theſe and ſuch-like Caſes all the Parties concern'd (as 'tis thought) ſhould agree, yet that Maxim, *Volenti non fit Injuria*, "To a *willing* Perſon there is "no *Injury* done," cannot take place here: Becauſe they are not *ſui Juris*; they have not a *Right* to *diſpoſe* of what they give up: *God* is *injured*, his *Law* is *violated*, and *he* has not *diſpenſed* with the Violation of it. Or, to put it in another Way, *all* Parties concern'd are *not* agreed; *God* is *one* Party concern'd, and *he* has not *conſented*. The ſame is to be ſaid of other Inſtances: For Example, that of *Drunkenneſs*. "I did as I would be done "by," (ſays the *profane Sot*, as it were in *Mockery* of my Text) "I made him ſo, "and would be made ſo myſelf." The ſame Anſwer takes place as before. No Man has a *Right* to make a Beaſt of *Himſelf*, any more than of *Another*: However he and his merry Companion might agree, the Divine Authority was ſtruck at by them Both. SERM. VI.

THUS

SERM. VI. THUS as to *theſe Particulars*; and I now give a more *general Anſwer*, including *theſe*, and *all other* Caſes of the *like Nature*; which is, *4thly*, That we are not to apply this Rule according to the *falſe* and *monſtrous Notions* of ſome *very few* Men, *mad in Wickedneſs*, thinking and acting contrary to the *common Dictates* of *Human Nature*; but according to *Reaſon*, and *Morality*, and the *general* ſtanding Maxims and Sentiments of Mankind. If this or that Man, for Inſtance, be ſo *abandon'd*, ſo bereft of all *moral*, and even *natural* Principles, as to be well pleaſed with having One who is, as it were, a Part of himſelf, an infamous Proſtitute to another; the Generality of Mankind have juſtly and truly quite contrary Sentiments, and according to *them* we muſt proceed. The Rule therefore is in ſhort this: "Whatſoever you would, agreeably "to the common Principles of Reaſon and "Morality, ſincerely, and *bonâ fide*, have "done to you, or at leaſt agreeably to thoſe "Principles *judge* fit and equitable to be "done to you, that do you to others, and "nothing but that." Thoſe Words [*at leaſt judge fit*, &c.] ſtrike off the Objection concerning

concerning the *puniſh'd Criminal*, and the *corrected Child*: That Clauſe [*agreeably to the Principles of Reaſon and Morality*] ſets aſide the Caſe of the *Adulterer*, the *Drunkard*, &c. And that Part [*ſincerely, and* bonâ fide] cuts off the Pretence of the *fraudulent* hypocritical *Dealer*, as above ſtated. SERM. VI.

BUT you will ſay, If the Matter ſtand thus, if the Rule be *explained* and *limited* by theſe *Conditions* and *Proviſo's*, what Occaſion was there for the Rule *at all?* And of what *Uſe* or *Significancy* is it, now it is given, either as to the *Plainneſs* and *Clearneſs* of the *Laws*, or our *Obedience* and *Conformity* to them? With regard to the *former*, How does *Doing as we would be done by* make *Juſtice* and *Charity* more *plain* than they were before? As to the *latter*; it ſeems, according to the Account I have given, a good Man does not act ſo and ſo upon the Principle of *Doing as he would be done by*, but becauſe it is agreeable to *Reaſon* and *Religion*, and *other Laws* of God and Nature. Or to put this laſt more ſtrongly: What we do is either *agreeable* to *Religion* and *Morality*, or it is *not*. If it be *not*, it cannot be *good*, upon whatever Principle we act.

SERM. VI. act. If it *be*, 'tis good for that *very Reaſon*; not becauſe we proceed upon the Principle of *Doing as we would be done by*. I ſhall begin with the laſt Part relating to the *Goodneſs* of our *Actions*; but ſhall ſo contrive my Anſwer, as to take in *all* the Parts of the *Objection*. I ſay then to the *firſt* Branch of the *Dilemma*, that 'tis true, the Action cannot be good, unleſs it be *agreeable* to *right Reaſon* and *Morality*, and the Laws of *God* and *Nature*, upon whatever *Principle* the *Agent* proceeds: And no more need be ſaid about *that*. To the *ſecond*: 'Tis as true that the Goodneſs of the Action depends upon its being *agreeable*, as aforeſaid; but it does not therefore follow, that it depends *not at all* upon the *Rule* of my *Text*, or that the *Rule itſelf* is *ſuperfluous* and *inſignificant*: Becauſe the *Truth* of this *Rule* is very *conſiſtent* with that *Agreeableneſs*; and ſo the Goodneſs of the Action may, and does, depend upon *both*. Then again, Thoſe *other* Laws are *particular*, relating to this or that particular *Kind* of Actions: *This* Rule is *general*; *pervading*, and, as it were, *actuating* and *enlivening* all thoſe particular Laws, and *facilitating* our

Obedience

Obedience to them; by ſhewing their *Equity* and *Reaſonableneſs*; by being always *ready*, and *preſent* to our Minds; *eaſy* to be *conſulted* upon all *Emergencies*, and for the clearing of moſt *Difficulties*; drawing the Laws *cloſe* and *home* to *Ourſelves*; making *Ourſelves* to be *thus far* Judges in our own Cauſe, inaſmuch as we *imagine* the Cauſe of *Others* to be *our own*: All which will further appear in the Progreſs of my Diſcourſe. This *Anſwer*, I think, takes in (as I propoſed it ſhould do) the whole *Objection*; as well that Part which relates to the *Clearneſs* of the *Laws*, as that which relates to our *Obedience*, and the moral *Goodneſs* of our *Actions*. SERM. VI.

I HERE obſerve, (for a Reaſon to be hereafter mentioned) that the Senſe of thoſe Words—*Men ſhould do to you,—ſo do to them*, is the ſame as if it had been ſaid, *Whatſoever you would* have done *to you, that do to others*: Which indeed is the true Meaning of the Place. I obſerve likewiſe, that the *Heathen* deliver'd this Rule only in the *Negative*: *Quod tibi non vis fieri, alteri ne feceris*; "Do not to another what you would "not have done to yourſelf:" Whereas

Chriſtians

SERM. VI. *Chriſtians* commonly expreſs it (as the Text does) in the *Affirmative: Do as you would be done by.* And though every *poſitive* Precept *implies* a *negative*, and ſo on the *Reverſe*; or, in other Words, every *Command* implies a *Prohibition*, and every *Prohibition* implies a *Command*, of its *Contrary*; yet the *Heathen* ſeem to have had but little Notion of the *Affirmative* Precept in this Caſe, nor even *Chriſtians* ſo much as they ſhould have, though the *latter* expreſs it as I ſaid. They ſeem to think, that if they *do nothing* to others but what they would willingly have done to themſelves, they have *fulfilled* this *Law*: When, in truth, they are obliged by it (as they have Power and Opportunity) to *do to* others, as they themſelves, were they in the ſame Circumſtances, would have others *do to* them: The whole Extent of *Charity*, as well as *Juſtice*, being included in this Precept; as we ſhall ſhew hereafter.

THE *Equity* and *Reaſonableneſs* of this Precept is ſo plain, that it is difficult to prove it; becauſe ſcarce any thing can be plainer than itſelf. The *Law of Nature* dictates it; and our Bleſſed Saviour did but reinforce

reinforce *that* Law, when he gave us *this*. It is a Remedy againſt the Prejudices of *Self-Love*, directing and commanding us to ſuppoſe *Ourſelves* in the Circumſtances of *Others*, to put ourſelves in their Room or Stead, and then indeed to make even *Self-Love* the *Meaſure* and *Standard* of our Behaviour towards *them*. In ſhort, it is the ſame in Subſtance and Effect with that great Commandment, *Thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour as thyſelf*: By which muſt be underſtood an Equality of *Kind* and *Proportion*, not of *Degree*; it being impoſſible that we ſhould love Others *ſo well*, or *ſo much*, as Ourſelves. The Meaning therefore is, that we muſt obſerve the ſame Meaſures in our Behaviour towards *them*, as *we*, were *their* Caſe *ours*, ſhould reaſonably deſire and expect that *they* ſhould obſerve towards *us*. SERM. VI.

I HAVE now endeavour'd to ſtate this great Point, and hope I have done it clearly, though in a few Words. Nor is it any reaſonable Objection, (as ſome cavilling Scepticks may pretend) that Things of this Nature want to be ſtated and explained. The ſame God who gave us *this* Portion of

Scripture

SERM. VI. Scripture gave us *other* Portions of Scripture, and right Reaſon to judge of them in Conjunction with each other. *Moral Maxims* cannot, in the Nature of Things, be deliver'd as definitively as *Mathematical Propoſitions*: All Laws, Human and Divine, muſt preſuppoſe, and be referred to, ſomething elſe; and moſt of them, at leaſt, require ſome Explanation.

I PROCEED now to my Second General Head; under which I am to conſider,

II. THE great *Extent* of this Precept, and the *comprehenſive Uſe* we are to make of it in the *whole Courſe* of our Behaviour towards others.—*For this is the Law and the Prophets*: That is, the Sum and Subſtance of our Duty deliver'd in the Law and the Prophets, *ſo far* as it relates to our *Neighbours*. It is not ſaid, ALL *the Law and the Prophets*, as it is elſewhere: * In which Aſſertion *both Tables* are included. *Here*, however, is *All* contained in *one* of them: All our Duty to our Neighbours, both in point of *Juſtice* and *Charity*. I ſhall apply this great Rule of our Actions,

1*ſt*,

* Matth. xxii. 40.

1*ſt*, To ſuch Caſes as are *plain* and *un-contested*. SERM. VI.

2*dly*, To ſuch as are, or at leaſt are pretended to be, *doubtful* and *difficult*.

I BEGIN with the *firſt-mentioned*. With reference to our *Perſons*; we are all certainly unwilling to have our Lives taken away, to be put in Terror of them, to be wounded, maim'd, beaten, aſſaulted: Here then are forbidden all Sorts of *Violence* to the *Perſons* of our *Neighbours*. With regard to our *Eſtates* or *Fortunes*; we would not be robb'd, cheated, over-reach'd, harraſs'd with Extortion and Oppreſſion, encroach'd upon, troubled with vexatious Law-Suits, and the like: In theſe Inſtances likewiſe let us not *do* what we ſhould be unwilling to *ſuffer*. With regard to *mutual Correſpondence*; we do not like to be deceiv'd, or impoſed upon by a direct Lie, nor even to have the Truth partially and fraudulently repreſented: Let us always *ſpeak the Truth from our Hearts*. As to our *Reputation*; we ſhould take it heavily to be traduced, ſlander'd, falſely accuſed: Let us in no Reſpect, in no Degree, *bear falſe witneſs againſt our Neighbour*. Would not any Man be

SERM. VI. highly grieved and provoked to have his *Marriage-Bed* defiled? *Thou ſhalt not commit Adultery.* On the contrary, we all deſire to have every thing ſaid and done by others, which tends to our Preſervation both in Body and Soul, to our Advantage in our Fortunes, to our Honour and Reputation, and in ſhort to the Improvement of our Happineſs in all Reſpects: For that Reaſon, we muſt do juſt ſo by them, as we have Power and Opportunity. Do we ſee a Man periſhing with Hunger? Would not we, were we in his Condition, deſire to be relieved? The Part we are to act is plain: To relieve *him.* Should we, if we were low and mean, deſire to be trampled upon and deſpiſed? Quite otherwiſe: Let us not then deſpiſe thoſe who are ſo; but, on the contrary, countenance, comfort, and encourage them: For this latter likewiſe *we* ſhould deſire, were *we* in *their* Circumſtances. If we have offended againſt our Neighbour, do we wiſh to be forgiven? Let us forgive thoſe who have offended againſt us. Would we not in all doubtful Caſes have the faireſt, moſt candid, and moſt favourable Interpretation put upon our Words and Actions?

Let

Let us do ſo by others. Have we done any thing ſo manifeſtly ill, that it will admit of no good Conſtruction; would we not have it cover'd and concealed as much as poſſible? Our Duty to others is no leſs manifeſt. Would we not in *Borrowing*, or *Buying*, be unwilling to have Advantage taken of our Neceſſity, to have exorbitant *Intereſt*, or an exorbitant *Price* exacted, becauſe the Lender, or Seller, knows that we can ill ſubſiſt without that Money, or thoſe Goods? Here again, let us *do as we would be done by.* We ſhould not take it well to be *over-reached* or *circumvented* in *Buying*, by the *Seller* concealing the Faults of the Commodity, impoſing upon our Ignorance in it, and proteſting that it is *good*, when he knows it to be *naught*: Let not us do ſo by *others*. This perhaps ſome may think ought to have been referred to the ſecond Diviſion, *viz.* of *difficult* and *doubtful* Caſes; becauſe *Queſtions* have been ſtarted and gravely *diſcuſſed* about it, as if it were a *dubious* Point: Whereas in truth it admits of *no Queſtion.* It is no better than plain downright *Lying* and *Cheating*; and thoſe who have allowed themſelves in theſe

SERM. VI.

SERM. VI. Practices, notwithſtanding the pretended *Myſteries of Trade*, the *Art of Selling*, and that *knaviſh* Maxim, *Caveat Emptor*, "Let "the Buyer look to it," ought ſeverely to repent, aſk God Forgiveneſs, do ſo no more, and make Reſtitution if they are able. The ſame Rule is to be applied to all particular Relations whatſoever. Are *Huſbands*, for Example, moroſe, imperious, or cruel to their *Wives?* Were they of the *other* Sex, would they be willing to have ſuch *Huſbands?* Are *Wives* refractory, unyielding, diſobedient to the gentle Authority and Directions of their *Huſbands*, contrary to the Laws of God and Nature, affecting Superiority, and even Dominion over them? Were they of the *other* Sex, would they be willing to have ſuch *Wives?* Are *Children* any way undutiful to their *Parents?* Would they be content to have *their* Children undutiful to *them?* Are *Parents* overſevere, and rather terrible than awful, to their *Children?* Would they have had their *own* Parents ſo to *them?* or did they like it, if they were ſo? Are *Princes* tyrannical to their *Subjects*, or *Maſters* to their *Servants?* Are *Subjects* rebellious to their *Princes*,

Princes, or *Servants* diſobedient to their *Maſters?* Were their Stations juſt the reverſe, would *theſe* deſire to have ſuch *Servants* or *Subjects*, and *thoſe* to have ſuch *Governors* or *Maſters?* You would not have your Friend *unfaithful* to *you*; be you therefore *faithful* to *him:* You would not have him reveal *your* Secret; be you careful to conceal *his*. And ſo in all other Inſtances, Relations, and Circumſtances, which it would be endleſs to mention. One more indeed I muſt take notice of; becauſe it is diſtinct from the reſt, as not falling under the ſame Rule of Judging. It is the Caſe of *loving our Enemies*. We cannot ſay, Are we not willing that our Enemies ſhould love us? We muſt *therefore* love them. Becauſe we may and ought to love them, even while they are and continue to be our Enemies: But when they love us, they ceaſe to be ſo. To clear this Point therefore we muſt fetch our Argument from a different Principle, not from *Men*, but from *God*; yet ſtill confining ourſelves to the Precept of my Text. "The Meaning of this Pre-"cept (ſays the learned Dr. *Hammond**) is

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* *Practical Catechiſm*, Lib. IV. Sect 2.

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" *to love my Neighbour as myſelf*, or not to " ſuffer my Self-Love to interpoſe, or make " me partial in judging of my Duty to " others, but thus to caſt when I do any " thing to my Brother, Would I be well " pleaſed to be ſo dealt with by any other? " Or, if I were to have my own Choice, " would I not deſire to be otherwiſe uſed " by other Men? Or yet farther, that what- " ſoever Uſage I deſire to meet with at " God's Hands, (which is certainly unde- " ſerved Mercy, Pardon of Treſpaſſes, and " doing Good to Enemies or Treſpaſſers) " the ſame I muſt perform to others. For " ſo this Phraſe [*whatſoever ye would that " Men ſhould do to you*] doth by an Hebra- " iſm import [*whatſoever ye would have done " unto you*] which is the Stile that this Pre- " cept is ordinarily read in; and then ex- " tends to whatſoever I deſire that God, or " *Chriſt*, ſhould do to me; *i. e.* not only all " the Juſtice, but all the Mercy, and Good- " neſs, and Bounty in the World." Thus He; and to adjuſt this Point of even loving our Enemies, I go further, and obſerve, that *Chriſt* actually not only loved, but died for his Enemies: *When we were Enemies, we were*

*were reconciled unto God by the Death of his Son.** And ſure we are very well pleaſed that he did ſo: And according to this Rule, the Rule of the Text, ſuppoſing it (as, abſtracting from the *Hebraiſm*, it would do) to run thus, "Whatſoever ye would have done to you, or (which depends upon the ſame Principle) are pleaſed with when it is done to you, that do ye to others;" I ſay, according to this Rule we ought to love even our Enemies, becauſe we are glad that *Chriſt* loved *Us*, when we were Enemies to *Him*. SERM. VI.

THUS then for *plain* Caſes. As to ſuch as are, or at leaſt are pretended to be, *difficult* and *doubtful*; a World of needleſs Caſuiſtry would be cut off, were this Precept conſcientiouſly attended to. Various Queſtions have been aſk'd concerning the *Lawfulneſs* and *Unlawfulneſs* of many Actions relating to *Juſtice*, both *Commutative* and *Diſtributive*, which the Perſon who aſks them might eaſily reſolve, by putting this plain Queſtion to himſelf: Were I in *that* Man's Place, ſhould I be willing to be *ſo* dealt with? Suppoſe *this* or *that* be barely

* Rom. v. 8.

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juſt or *lawful*, is it not *extreme hard*? Should not I think it ſo, were the Caſe *mine*? And does any Man like to have extreme Hardſhips put upon *him*? In Times of *Dearth* and *Scarcity*, for Inſtance, we cannot ſay 'tis directly *unjuſt* even in a very *rich* Man to ſell to a *poor* one according to the *Height* of the current *Price*: But it is very *hard*, very *rigorous*: If it be not *unjuſt*, as the Word is commonly uſed, it is certainly *uncharitable*; and the Rule of my Text (as we have ſeen) includes *Charity*, as well as *Juſtice*. For a *rich Creditor* to *impriſon* a *Debtor* who, he knows, is *unable* to pay, is not, vulgarly ſpeaking, *unjuſt*; but 'tis very *wicked*, for all that: The Creditor would think it barbarous Uſage, were the Caſe *his own*: And for thus impriſoning his poor Neighbour, he will, without a ſevere Repentance, lie in Priſon till *he has paid the uttermoſt Farthing*;* *i. e.* (to ſtrip the Senſe of the figurative Expreſſion) he will lie in *Hell* for ever. Again: It is not ſtrictly *unjuſt* to *puniſh* a *Criminal* with the utmoſt *Rigour* of the Law, when, according to the Meaſures of Equity and Prudence, there is

* Matth. v. 26.

is Room for *Mercy*: But then we know that Maxim of Equity, *Summum Jus ſumma Injuria*, "The moſt rigorous Juſtice is "the Height of Injuſtice;" which, in its right Meaning, will ever be found reaſonable and true: And any Man would acknowledge it, were he himſelf to be the Sufferer. Again, SERM. VI.

IT may be enquired, Whether, according to this Rule, all Sorts of *Gaming* be not utterly unlawful; becauſe, in all Kinds and Degrees it, *Every-body* deſires to *gain*, and *No-body* deſires that Another ſhould gain of *Him*. We anſwer, Playing for great Sums is *ſinful* indeed, though not ſimply upon the Account of the Reaſon alledged in the Obſervation, but becauſe it is a Breach of the Tenth Commandment, *Thou ſhalt not covet*, and *ſo* indeed is a Breach of *this* Rule likewiſe; for no Man would have his own Goods, always meaning any conſiderable Part of them, coveted or taken away from him by another. But if the Sum contended for be a mere Trifle, ſuch Gaming is not forbidden in virtue of this Precept, nor for the Reaſon here aſſigned, nor for any other Reaſon that I know of: For though even

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even here every Perſon had *rather* be the Winner than the Loſer, yet the Thing is ſo *inconſiderable*, that he loſes without any manner of *Diſturbance*; and by *mutual Compact* each gives the other a *Right* to win of him, if he can. If it be ſaid, as to this laſt, that the *mutual Compact*, and *Ceſſion of Right*, is the ſame when the *greateſt* Sums are at Stake; I anſwer, It is true; and yet the Rule of my Text is violated in *this* Caſe, and not in *that*. For, notwithſtanding this *Agreement* and *Yieldance*, each Party is to the laſt Degree *unwilling* to be the Loſer: They are in a Kind of *War* with each other; and each is endeavouring to do by his *Neighbour*, what he would not, and that according to the Meaſures of Reaſon and Equity, have done by *Himſelf*. A Right, according to the Language of human Laws, may be yielded to a Man, who yet in a *Chriſtian*, nay in a *morally equitable* Senſe, may, by making uſe of it, be not only *uncharitable*, but even *unjuſt*: He *may* be at leaſt uncharitable, and certainly *is* ſo in this Caſe. He is moreover, notwithſtanding this *mutual Compact*, highly guilty of *coveting his Neighbour's Goods*; and conſequently offends

offends even againſt *this* Precept, the Pre- SERM. cept of my Text, as I before hinted. Sup- VI. poſe two or more Perſons (a Thing which not unfrequently happens) ſhould, for the *Trial* of their *Strength*, or ſome ſuch fooliſh Reaſon, agree to fight, to tear, maim, and wound one another, though without Danger of *Death*; admitting here (which yet may well be queſtion'd) that they have ſuch a Power over their own Bodies, as mutually to transfer this Right; yet, notwithſtanding ſuch an Agreement, do they nothing, think we, contrary to *Chriſtian Charity*, and even *Juſtice?* nothing contrary to the Command of my *Text?* They certainly do; and *each* does to the *other*, what according to the Meaſures of Reaſon and Morality he would not have done to *himſelf*. It is the ſame, in effect, as to the preſent Inſtance, which relates to Men's *Fortunes*, as the other does to their *Perſons*. In all Sorts of *Gaming*, whether *lawful* in themſelves or not, *Fraud* and *Cheating* is certainly *unlawful*, though many ſeem to think otherwiſe: And this great Rule, of *Doing as we would be done by*, ſufficiently ſhews it to be ſo. Indeed if all Parties agree

before-

SERM. VI. beforehand to make their Advantage by any Means, the Caſe is changed; and what would otherwiſe be Fraud is not ſo now.

To mention another Inſtance. Some have made it a Queſtion, whether it be not lawful for *Children* to rob or defraud their *Parents*, *Wives* their *Huſbands*, and *Subjects* their *Sovereigns*; or rather, whether it be properly any Robbery or Fraud at all. How this comes to be made a Queſtion, I cannot imagine: However, to omit other more direct Conſiderations, the Rule of my Text will ſoon decide it. Particularly as to the *laſt* Inſtance; not to inſiſt upon the Reaſon of the Thing, that *Kings* and *Sovereign Princes* have a Right to their *Tributes* and *Cuſtoms*, by the ſame Law which gives *Subjects* a Right to their *private Eſtates*, and it muſt be at leaſt as great a Sin to defraud *Superiors* as *Equals*; nor upon that poſitive Command in Scripture, *Render Tribute to whom Tribute, and Cuſtom to whom Cuſtom is due:* * I ſay, not to inſiſt upon all this, let the Perſon who with-holds theſe Dues aſk his own Conſcience, whether, if He were in the Place of the *Sovereign*, he ſhould not think

* Rom. xiii. 7.

think himſelf injured by ſuch *Subjects*? Private Perſons are apt enough, upon other Accounts, to imagine themſelves in the Places of Kings; let them imagine themſelves to be ſo upon this Account, and then conſult their own Conſciences, as I juſt now ſaid. SERM. VI.

MANY more particular Caſes might be alledged, but the Time will not permit me to diſcuſs them. Nor indeed is it neceſſary: Theſe may ſerve for a Specimen or Sample, and other Caſes may be determin'd by them. Upon the Whole, This great Precept *includes* all the *expreſs* Commandments relating to our *Neighbours*; and is moreover to be uſed, *in Aid* to them, to ſupply the *Defects* of thoſe which are *not expreſs*. It is an unerring *Index*, which always *points right*, and will never deceive us. Were this Rule duly and conſcientiouſly applied, every Man, of common Reaſon, might in moſt Caſes be his own Caſuiſt. Nor need we go far to ſeek it: We carry it about with us, and cannot forget it, if we truly remember *Ourſelves*. What *happy Effects* the punctual Obſervance

of

SERM. VI. of it would have upon human Life, both publick and private, is too plain to be proved. That we may all *experience* its *happy Effects*, both in *this* World and in the *next*,

God of his infinite Mercy grant, &c.

SERMON

SERMON VII.

The Government of the PASSIONS.

LUKE XXI. 19.

In your Patience poſſeſs ye your Souls.

PATIENCE, in its *firſt* and moſt *proper* Acceptation, is a Virtue by which we endure great Evils, Pains, Calamities, or Afflictions, of what Kind ſoever, with Calmneſs and Tranquillity of Mind, with an humble Reſignation to the Will and Wiſdom of God. Its *Object* therefore is *Evil* or *Pain*, and *Suffering* is neceſſarily included in its *Idea*. And by this it is diſtinguiſh'd from *Contentment*, a Virtue with which it is often injudiciouſly confounded.

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founded. Nor are *any* Evils the Objects of *Patience*, as the Word is moſt *commonly* and *ſtrictly* uſed; but *great* ones only. It is one Part of *Fortitude*, viz. that which uſually goes by the Name of *Paſſive Valour*; and one Part of *Humility*, viz. that which relates to *God*, implying a dutiful Submiſſion to him in all his Diſpenſations, though never ſo grievous to Fleſh and Blood. In this *ſtrict* and *higheſt* Senſe it is here plainly taken by our Bleſſed Saviour: For when he gives this Advice to his Diſciples, he is warning them of thoſe dreadful Perſecutions to which they would be expoſed in the Diſcharge of their Duty, and the Propagation of his Religion. But in a *wide* Signification, and that too *proper* enough, it includes the Bearing or Enduring of *leſſer* Evils; ſuch as deſerve not the Name of *Pains*, *Afflictions*, *Calamities*, but are only *Inconveniences*, *Troubles*, *Uneaſineſſes*; which may not only be *leſſened* by *Patience*, but wholly *removed*, as thoſe other *cannot*. Of *theſe* (becauſe there is a particular Reaſon for it) I ſhall mention *one* Sort, and that is thoſe of *Indignities*, *Affronts*, *Provocations*: As *Patience* has *theſe* for its Object, it falls in

in with the Virtue of *Meekneſs*; whoſe Office it is to regulate and reſtrain the unruly Paſſion of *Anger*. In Diſcourſes of Morality and Divinity *Patience* and *Meekneſs* are ſometimes uſed promiſcuouſly; and in vulgar Language, when a Man is in a violent *Rage*, he is ſaid to be out of all *Patience*. Nay, this Virtue may in a *yet wider* Senſe (and in *that* I ſhall chuſe to conſider it) comprehend the *Government of all the Paſſions*, the *Concupiſcible*, as well as the *Iraſcible*. To *forbear* ſomething is to *bear* ſomething; and we cannot *abſtain* from *Pleaſure* to which we are ſtrongly *ſolicited*, without *enduring* a great deal of *Pain*. On the contrary, *eager unreſtrained Deſires*, or *Longings*, have the Epithet *impatient* added to them, and that with great Propriety. I ſhall, as I ſaid, *take occaſion* to uſe the Word in this *extenſive* Signification, though our Saviour uſed it in a more *limited* one. SERM. VII.

"*Poſſeſs ye your Souls.*" All the Commentators by *poſſeſs* underſtand *preſerve*, or *ſave*; and take the Whole as if it had been ſaid, "By your *Patience* you will be moſt likely even to ſave your Lives in *this* World, but will certainly ſave your Souls

SERM. VII. in the World *to come:*" Agreeably to that of our Bleſſed Lord, *He that endureth to the End ſhall be ſaved*;* and, *He that loſeth his Life for my ſake ſhall find it.*† And that this is *one* very good Senſe of the Paſſage I readily grant; nay, in all Probability, the *principal* one intended by our Saviour, conſidering the Coherence of the Context, and the whole Drift of his Diſcourſe. But if we take the Word *poſſeſs* in its *firſt* and *moſt proper* Signification, it will give us *another* Senſe, and that a very good one, and very conſiſtent with the *former*; which is this. By *Patience*, i. e. by duly regulating all your *Paſſions*, by *abſtaining* from what is pleaſant but forbidden, and *enduring* all Hardſhips and Afflictions with humble Reſignation to the Will of God, you will be *Poſſeſſors of your Souls*, i. e. *Maſters of yourſelves*, *free* in your Thoughts, Words, and Actions. This is agreeable to the common Way of ſpeaking. When a Man is under the Dominion of Another, and entirely ſubject to his Dictates, 'tis vulgarly ſaid, *His Soul is not his own*; and in moſt Languages, *He is beſide himſelf*, *Out of himſelf*, (or Phraſes equivalent)

* Matth. x. 22. † Ver. 39.

valent) nay, in ours, *He is not himſelf*, are Expreſſions denoting the violent Tranſport of ungovern'd Paſſion, of any Kind, whether *Love*, *Deſire*, *Joy*, &c. on the *one* hand; or *Fear*, *Grief*, *Anger*, &c. on the *other*; but eſpecially the *latter*. In diſcourſing upon the Text therefore thus underſtood, I ſhall ſhew, SERM. VII.

I. THAT without duly *regulating all our Paſſions*, and eſpecially *bearing Afflictions* with *Patience*, we cannot truly *poſſeſs our Souls*, or be properly ſpeaking *Maſters of ourſelves*.

II. THAT therefore to *regulate* the *former*, and *bear* the *latter*, is both our *Duty* and our *Intereſt*; becauſe, without thus *poſſeſſing our Souls*, we cannot act according to the *Dignity* of our *Nature*, obey the *Laws* of *God* and *right Reaſon*, nor be *happy* either *here* or *hereafter*.

III. How, or by *what Means*, we may ſo order our unruly Affections, and by conſequence ſo *poſſeſs our Souls*.

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I. FIRST then, Without duly *regulating all our Paſſions*, and eſpecially *bearing Afflictions* with *Patience*, we cannot truly *poſſeſs our Souls*, or be properly ſpeaking *Maſters of ourſelves*. If we do not govern our *Paſſions*, they will certainly govern *Us*: And then that Queſtion of St. *Paul* may be fitly aſked, *Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourſelves Servants to obey, his Servants ye are to whom ye obey?* * How can he be ſaid to *poſſeſs his Soul*, or be *Maſter of himſelf*, who is a *Slave* either to his *Appetites*, or to his *Averſions*; to *Love* and *Deſire* on the *one* hand, or to *Grief*, *Fear*, *Anger* on the *other*; in ſhort, who is entirely *broken* and *ſubdued* by the Softneſs of *Pleaſure*, or the Rigour of *Pain?* Particularly as to the laſt-mentioned, If a Man be *dejected* in Adverſity, he is an *abject* Vaſſal and Captive; if *outrageous*, he is an *inſolent*, but yet an *impotent* one, vainly ſtruggling with his Chains, and adding to his Thraldom by ſo doing. The unbridled Exceſs of any Paſſion is a Kind of temporary *Madneſs*; the Perſon labouring under it being commonly ſaid to be *beſide*

* Rom. vi. 16.

ſide himſelf, as before obſerved: And the Mind of him who is *habitually* ſubject to the Dominion of them *all*, is as *fenceleſs* and *expoſed*, as the Ocean is to the Winds; and, like that, is continually *ſwelling* and *toſſing*. Sometimes indeed, like that too, it *happens* to be calm and quiet; but 'tis merely *becauſe* it happens; 'tis becauſe the *Wind* does not *blow*, and for no other Reaſon. And can ſuch a one as this be deem'd a *Poſſeſſor* of his own *Soul*, or Maſter of himſelf? The *Heathen* Philoſophers and Poets maintained this *Theſis*, (and ſaid many excellent Things upon it) That the *wiſe* and *good* Man only is *free*, and that a Slave to his *Paſſions* is of all Slaves the moſt contemptible. From whence it follows, SERM. VII.

II. SECONDLY, That to *regulate* our *unruly Affections*, and particularly to bear *Afflictions* with *Patience*, is both our *Duty* and our *Intereſt*; becauſe, without thus *poſſeſſing our Souls*, we cannot act according to the *Dignity* of our *Nature*, obey the *Laws of God* and *right Reaſon*, nor be *happy* either *here* or *hereafter*. This, I ſay, is a Conſequence of the foregoing Head: For that

SERM. VII. *Slavery* is *Miſery* nobody doubts; and God (ſo great is his Goodneſs) has made our *Duty* and our *Intereſt* even in *this Life*, and much more in the *next*, inſeparable from each other. But now to be a little more particular. If we are not *noſtri Juris*, Poſſeſſors of our *Souls*, i. e. of *Ourſelves*, as I have explain'd it, we are but *Tenants at Will* for our Peace and Quiet to every paltry croſs Accident that happens to fall in our Way. Every inconſiderable *Thing*, or inconſiderable *Perſon*, will be able to diſcompoſe and torment us. The vileſt and moſt ignoble of the Rabble will have it in his Power to be a Plague to one of the greateſt of Men, if he be not truly great in Mind, as well as in other Reſpects: For 'tis plainly in the Power of the loweſt of the People (and their *Power* is very often ſeconded by their *Will)* to be impudent and inſolent, ungrateful, and every way provoking; and if one of the higheſt of their Superiors has ſo little Command over himſelf as to be enraged at an Inſolence which he ought to deſpiſe, every worthleſs Wretch that can come near him has him at his Mercy, and can make him miſerable when he

he pleaſes. Thus by being a Slave to his *Paſſions* he becomes a Slave to *every other* Slave that thinks fit to make him ſo. And what a *little*, as well as *miſerable* Figure muſt this Man make, notwithſtanding all his Greatneſs! SERM. VII.

UNLESS we are thus fortified, every trivial *domeſtick* Trouble, every Uneaſineſs in our *Buſineſs*, and the Affairs of ordinary Life, will be heighten'd and ſwell'd into a great Calamity, and be likely to draw on many greater. And ſuch Croſſes and untoward Accidents there *will* be, let us manage never ſo prudently. What by the Frailty and Uncertainty of this imperfect mortal State, what by the Perverſeneſs, Folly, and Wickedneſs of thoſe with whom we have to do, and ſometimes of thoſe with whom we have *nothing* to do, there will ſeldom or never be wanting abundant Matter to diſquiet us, if we are ſo weak as to be diſquieted by it. We ought, 'tis true, to be *concern'd* at the Faults and Follies of Others; but if we are not only *concern'd at* them, but *tormented by* them, their Fault and Folly muſt be great indeed, to be greater than our own.

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IF we do not *poſſeſs our Souls*, we may as well *poſſeſs nothing elſe*: For we can *only* poſſeſs it, *enjoy* it we cannot. All that the World can afford will not make us happy; nay, the more we have, the more Occaſions, and freſh Matter of Vexation will ariſe from it. Nothing is more common than for a Man to fancy, that if he could but get ſuch or ſuch a particular Thing, he ſhould be happy; and ſo indeed he might be, if he would: But then, having obtain'd it, by fretting and teazing himſelf about one *trifling Circumſtance* or other in the *Management* of it, he quite ſpoils all, and turns the Bleſſing into a Curſe. It is, in truth, aſtoniſhing as well as deplorable, to conſider, how many there are who for want of thus *ruling their Spirits*, as the *Wiſe Man* expreſſes it, make themſelves miſerable in ſpite of Providence, by their *little peeviſh, perverſe Humours*; turning *Proſperity* into *Adverſity* by viewing every thing in the *worſt Light*, finding fault, wrangling, and contradicting, and perpetually quarrelling about nothing. Another, on the contrary, having very little of this World's Goods *without*, but being calm and ſerene *within*, ſhall

ſhall be eaſy and happy; nay, a third ſhall be more ſo in extreme Poverty and Pain, than the firſt in Health and Abundance. SERM. VII.

LITTLE leſs wretched is the Condition of him who is a Slave to his *Appetites*; paſſionately *doating* upon this, and impatiently *longing* for that; being ſo tranſportingly *over-joy'd* at another thing, as to faint, and almoſt die under it. Nor leſs happy is he who keeps theſe Affections likewiſe under due Regulation; and Both for Reaſons ſo plain that they need not be mention'd.

AS obvious it is to remark, that to be habitually ſubject to the *Paſſions* of either Kind is an Argument of a *little Soul*, and beneath the *Dignity* of our Nature. 'Tis *childiſh* and *unmanly* at beſt, and ſhews a wretched *Impotency* of Mind. Whereas (in the elegant and noble Language of *Solomon*) *He that is ſlow to Anger* (and the ſame may be ſaid of the other Affections) *is better than the Mighty, and he that ruleth his Spirit than he that taketh a City.* * Agreeable to which is that of a Heathen almoſt in the ſame Words, *Fortior eſt qui ſe*, &c. He that conquers himſelf is more brave than the Conqueror

* Prov. xvi. 32.

SERM. VII. Conqueror of the ſtrongeſt Town or Fortreſs.

BUT here we muſt take notice, that the Paſſions are only to be *govern'd*, not to be *extirpated*, as the *Stoicks* would have it: They are in themſelves *naturally good*, and become *morally evil* only by *Accident*, i. e. by being ill managed. Nay, a good and wiſe Man may be *ſurprized* even into exceſſive Paſſion, of either Kind: But then it muſt not be *often*, nor the *Continuance* of it *long*, nor the *Degree* of it ſo *exceſſive* as to produce any conſiderably miſchievous Effect. If it be, he ſo far ceaſes to be a good and wiſe Man. St. *James* compares the Government of the *Tongue* (and the ſame is applicable to that of the *Paſſions)* to the Government of a *Horſe*. And though a very well managed one may ſometimes ſtart aſide, and ſtruggle with the Bit; yet we all know, he cannot be well managed, if he be *often* reſtive, or *ever* diſmount his Rider.

THE *beſt* and *wiſeſt* of Men (that we may obſerve it in paſſing) are apt to be impatient at one Thing, I mean the reigning Wickedneſs of the World. *It is enough now, O Lord,* (ſays

(ſays the great Prophet *Elijah*) *take away my Life.** And afterwards, *I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hoſts; for the Children of Iſrael have forſaken thy Covenant, thrown down thine Altars, and ſlain thy Prophets with the Sword; and I, even I only am left, and they ſeek my Life to take it away.*† But even this Impatience muſt not be indulged, though it proceeds from a *good* Principle, *viz.* Zeal for the Glory of God, and Concern for the Souls of Men. We ought to be *ſorry* for their Guilt and Miſery, but not to *repine*, much leſs to *murmur* at it. We muſt do our Endeavour to make the World better; if it will not be ſo, we cannot help it: If others will not do their Duty, let us be ſure to do ours; and not be guilty of *one* Sin (that of *Impatience*) becauſe they are guilty of *many*. If Men *will* be wicked, 'tis agreeable to the Juſtice and Providence of God to *permit* their Wickedneſs: Nay, there could be no Free Will, and conſequently no true Virtue, if it were otherwiſe. Beſides; the World, though over-run with Corruption, may not perhaps be quite ſo bad as we imagine. *Elijah* thought

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* 1 Kings xix. 4. † Ver. 10.

SERM. VII. thought there was no Worſhipper of the true God ſurviving, except himſelf; but that God aſſured him of his Miſtake: *Yet* (ſays he) *I have left me ſeven thouſand in Iſrael; all the Knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every Mouth which hath not kiſſed him.** But to return.

IF we do not *poſſeſs our Souls* here, according to the Senſe in which I am now conſidering it, we ſhall moſt certainly *loſe* them hereafter: And on the contrary, if we *poſſeſs* them *here*, we ſhall as certainly *ſave* them *hereafter:* For great is the *Wickedneſs*, as well as *Folly*, of the *one*; and great the *Virtue*, as well as *Wiſdom*, of the *other*. To keep the inferior Faculties of the Soul in Subjection to the ſuperior, is the main Principle of moral Goodneſs, and its Contrary of moral Evil: Particularly, the Virtue of *Patience*, ſtrictly ſo call'd, is moſt eminent and illuſtrious. It ſhews the Perſon to be *entirely* God's loyal Subject, and faithful Servant; ſhews him to be *wholly* devoted to him, without any Reſerve or Exception. If *Patience has its perfect Work*† upon us, we are ourſelves as perfect as this State

* Ver. 18. † James i. 4.

State will permit. On the other ſide, *Impatience* and *Murmuring* at his Diſpenſations, though never ſo harſh and ſevere, is downright *Rebellion:* And thoſe are grievouſly miſtaken, who think this Vice inconſiderable, becauſe the contrary Virtue is ſo diſtinguiſhingly great. Perſons in Affliction are apt to flatter themſelves, that becauſe they *are* in Affliction, for that very Reaſon their Impatience is merely a Sin of Infirmity; nay, that God will have Mercy upon them in the *next* World, notwithſtanding all their *other* Sins, in conſideration of their Sufferings in *this.* But alas! the Queſtion is not *whether* we ſuffer or no, but *how* we ſuffer. It is true, the lower Degrees of *Impatience* may be no more than Sins of Infirmity: But, in the main, do theſe Perſons conſider, that were it not for *Afflictions* there could be no ſuch Thing as the *Virtue* of *Patience*, and the *Sin* of *Impatience?* They would do well to conſider too, that taking one thing with another, with regard to our future State, it may admit of a Doubt whether it be more difficult to *bear* Proſperity or Adverſity. They are not therefore ſo very great *Sufferers*, in Compariſon with others, SERM. VII.

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others, as they may imagine. However, be our Sufferings (commonly call'd ſo) in this Life what they will, they are not the hundredth Part ſo much as even the beſt of us deſerve: They are inflicted upon us by God, the Sovereign Lord of all his Creatures, whoſe Wiſdom, Juſtice, and Goodneſs are infinite; they are ordain'd to an excellent End, the making us better in this World, and eternally happy in the next: Upon all which Accounts it is our Duty to bear them not only with *Patience*, but with *Thankfulneſs*.

BUT to comprehend all, and take the Word *Patience* in its wideſt Extent, it is manifeſtly our Duty (becauſe it is commanded by the Laws of God and Nature) to live up to the Dignity of our rational Species, that is, to maintain the Dominion of Reaſon over Paſſion, and not to relapſe into *Children*, much leſs degenerate into *Brutes*. The Neceſſity of thus *poſſeſſing our Souls* appears likewiſe from hence, that without it we cannot attend to the Duties of Religion as we ought. Our Minds labouring under the Perturbation of Anger, Grief, Fear, Deſire, or any other violent Paſſion,

Paſſion, our Thoughts will neceſſarily be abſent when we addreſs ourſelves to God in Prayer; and there will be nothing but *Diſtraction*, inſtead of *Devotion*. SERM. VII.

III. How, or by *what Means*, we may govern our Affections, and by conſequence *poſſeſs our Souls*, is the *Third* and *Laſt* Thing I propoſed to conſider. And this is the grand Difficulty of all: *Hoc opus, hic labor eſt.* But before we come to lay down our *Rules*, it will be requiſite to premiſe ſome *Obſervations*. And, 1*ſt*, By *governing* I do not mean *preventing* the *Riſings* and *Emotions* of them; for that would in effect be *extirpating* them; (which, as I before took notice, is neither *practicable*, nor *deſireable*;) but only preventing the *Exceſs* and long *Continuance* of them: Nor do I mean hindering them from making us at all *uneaſy*, (which is likewiſe impoſſible) but only from making us *miſerable*. For Example; in the Inſtance of *Anger*, to be injur'd, inſulted, and abuſed, eſpecially by an *Inferior*, or a Perſon obliged to us, (for that is always one of the moſt *provoking* Circumſtances) cannot but create an *uneaſy* Thought: 'Tis, in its

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its own Nature, *ſhocking*; and we can no more make it ceaſe to be ſo, than we can make any diſagreeable *bodily Senſation* ceaſe to be diſagreeable. But we may bear it without *Rage* or *Fury*: To prevent which is manifeſtly in our Power, and no rational Perſon will deny it. 2*dly*, We muſt diſtinguiſh between our *Paſſions*, and our natural *bodily Appetites*, ſuch as *Hunger* and *Thirſt*; which are not *Paſſions*, and cannot be *govern'd* by us, though the Paſſions relating to them may. A Man cannot *govern* his Hunger or Thirſt, nor leſſen it, any otherwiſe than by eating or drinking; but he may *bear* it patiently, and ſo leſſen the *Pain* of it, and check and reſtrain that *Deſire* which reſults from it. 3*dly*, Some Paſſions are of a *mix'd* Nature, partly *Paſſions*, and partly *Vices*; as *Malice*, and *Envy*. So much of them as is vicious may, and ought to be, not only govern'd, but wholly extirpated. 4*thly*, It does not follow that a Man keeps his Paſſions in Subjection, becauſe he is (to Appearance) cool and ſedate. All even violent Paſſions are not loudly boiſterous: But a Man may have a *Calm* in his *Countenance*, and yet a *Tempeſt* in his *Boſom*.

Boſom. What think we of cool deliberate *Malice?* It never raves and ſtorms outwardly, but it preys and corrodes inwardly. *Fear* in its Nature is not *fierce*; but one may be a *Slave* to that, as well as to any thing elſe; nor can one poſſibly be a Slave to a more mercileſs Tyrant. Perſons of a *ſullen* Temper ſeldom make much *Noiſe*; but, generally ſpeaking, none are more tormented by their Paſſions than they. *5thly*, As to one Paſſion in particular, which is ſo conſiderable a one that it is commonly call'd *Paſſion κατ' ἐξοχὴν*, or by way of *Eminence*, I mean *Anger*, and which (in moſt Tempers at leaſt) is of all the moſt difficult to be govern'd; we may obſerve, that little ſhort Fits and Starts of it (though pretty frequent) may be conſiſtent with its being tolerably well govern'd: But to indulge a peeviſh, fretful Humour, upon every trifling Occaſion, (though the Perſon never flies out into Rage and Fury) is utterly inconſiſtent with it, whatever the Generality of Mankind may imagine. Here, however, theſe Things being premiſed, I proceed to the *Rules* and *Directions* I would lay down for

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SERM. VIII. the Regulation and good Government of our *Paſſions* in general.

HERE then, beſides earneſt, devout, and conſtant *Prayer* to God (ſince it is He ALONE who can abſolutely *order the unruly Wills and Affections of ſinful Men*, and He alone, without whom all our Endeavours will be to no purpoſe) for the Grace and Aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit; which Prayer muſt be ſo much the more earneſt, inaſmuch as the Taſk is of the utmoſt Importance and the greateſt Difficulty; and not to inſiſt that to the *Government* of the Paſſions may be reduced the Wiſdom and Diſcretion, in ſome Caſes, and as to ſome Perſons, of *avoiding* the *Occaſions* of inflaming them; it being ſometimes here, as it is ſometimes in War, when *fugere eſt Triumphus*, to fly is to conquer: I ſay, beſides this, it is neceſſary,

1*ſt*, To form a right Judgment of the Things of this World, as compar'd with thoſe of the next; to make a true Eſtimate both of its *Goods* and its *Evils*: Which will prevent our immoderate Longings after the *former*, and our Impatience under the *lat-*

ter.

ter. As *Love* and *Hate* are the Cardinal Paſſions, all the reſt being no more than *Modifications* of theſe two, according as the Object is preſent or abſent, eaſy or difficult, poſſible or impoſſible to be obtained or avoided; from whence reſult *Joy* and *Grief*, *Deſire* and *Averſion*, *Hope* and *Fear*, &c. And as *Love* or *Hatred* neceſſarily reſults from our *Judgment* of this or that Thing, as *good* or *evil*, and increaſes or diminiſhes in proportion to that Judgment concerning the Degrees of that Good or Evil: From theſe Things laid together it muſt needs follow, that all our *Paſſions*, as relating to the Things of this Life, will be more or leſs, weaker or ſtronger, according to the Judgment or Eſtimate which we make of them. Conſider then, what is this mighty Thing, which we ſo violently love, long for, or rejoice in: Some *Triſle* or other, very likely, even in compariſon with the Goods of this World; but moſt certainly ſo in compariſon with thoſe of the next. Be it *Wealth*, or *Honour*, or the Gratification of any ſenſual Appetite, it is vain and empty even in the *Poſſeſſion*, but a mere Nothing in reſpect of *Duration*. *For what is* SERM. VII.

SERM. VII. *our Life? It is a Vapour, which appeareth for a little time, and then vaniſheth away.** On the other ſide, what is it that we are ſo grieved for, or afraid of? An Evil, it may be, purely imaginary, and of our own making: Or if it be a real one, very likely it is not a great one, any farther than we make it ſo by our own falſe Judgment of it. Perhaps 'tis ſome croſs Accident; ſome little Loſs, or Diſappointment; the perverſe, ungrateful, fooliſh, and wicked Behaviour of others towards us: Theſe indeed are and will be *Troubles*, but they need not be *Torments*.

Ponamus nimios gemitus; flagrantior æquo
Non debet dolor eſſe viri, nec vulnere major;

is the Saying of a wiſe Heathen †, exactly agreeable to the Subſtance of what I am now diſcourſing. But to put it at the *worſt*, ſuppoſing them to be ſuch Evils as are the Objects of *Patience* moſt properly ſo call'd, direct Miſery, extreme Poverty and Want, the Tortures and Agonies of acute Diſeaſes; theſe indeed are terrible Trials: Nor is it in the Power of Reaſon and Religion to hinder

* James iv. 14. † Juvenal. Sat. xiii.

hinder them from being exceeding grievous, though they can in ſome meaſure leſſen and abate them. But if we cannot avoid *groaning* under them, we may avoid *murmuring*. Such Complaints as are merely *animal* cannot perhaps be ſuppreſſed, but all *others* may: We may bear theſe dreadful Inflictions with humble Submiſſion to the Divine Will, conſider that they are nothing to what the Sins even of the beſt of us have deſerv'd, nothing to eternal Torments; which we ſhall be likely to avoid, by bearing theſe with *Patience:* And that we ſhall do, if we *reckon* (with the bleſſed St. *Paul) that the Sufferings of this preſent Life are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that ſhall be revealed* *; and conſider (with him too) that *our light Affliction, which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.* † SERM. VII.

2*dly*, LET us fix in our Hearts a thorough Love of God, and Hatred of Sin. The two *Cardinal* Paſſions, *Love* and *Hatred*, being thus rightly directed, thoſe *ſubordinate* to both will of courſe be ſo likewiſe. And if *God* be the main Object of

* Rom. viii. 18. † 2 Cor. iv. 17.

SERM. VII. the *former*, and *Sin* of the *latter*, there will be no Danger *of* or *from* their being exorbitant or immoderate.

3*dly*, OUR *Troubles* will be much leſſen'd and abated, (and conſequently our *Paſſions* reduced, and in Subjection) if we live under a conſtant habitual Expectation of them. This will prevent *Surprize*, which adds the greateſt Weight to all our Uneaſineſſes. When we are at preſent free from them, we are apt to think we ſhall always be ſo. Whereas we can no more live without *Trouble* (for any conſiderable Time, I mean) than we can live without *Breathing*: We are *born to* it, *as the Sparks fly upwards*,* *i. e.* have a *natural Tendency* towards it: As one goes off, another will come on; as ſure as we live here, as ſure as we are not yet in Heaven. But it may be ſaid, Is not this very hard upon us? No, not even upon the beſt of us, for a plain Reaſon more than once mentioned already. Beſides; were it not for this, (which has been hinted at too) where would be our *Virtue?* This World was ever intended (and 'tis moſt fit and reaſonable it ſhould be ſo) to try and prove us,

* Job v. 7.

us, not to make us perfectly happy. One may likewiſe object, that to have a continual *Proſpect* of Trouble is actually to *be* in ſome Degree of Trouble; for it muſt needs be an *uneaſy* Thought: And how then can ſuch an Expectation make us *eaſy?* I anſwer, 1*ſt*, I ſaid an *habitual* Expectation of it, which by no means implies that our Thoughts muſt be always *actually upon* it, (very much otherwiſe) but only that we have ſuch a general ſettled Perſuaſion in our Minds. Beſides, a calm rational *Expectation* is one thing; and an abject, ſlaviſh, tormenting *Fear* quite another. 2*dly*, Let us do what we will, we *cannot* be *altogether* eaſy; (as 'tis the very Deſign of this Particular to remind us:) but this which I am recommending tends to make us ſo, much more than its Contrary. SERM. VII.

4*thly*, If it be enquired, whether we can beſt rule the Paſſions by ſuppreſſing them, or giving them Vent; I anſwer, by the *former*, in all Inſtances except one. *Anger* (like *Fire*) gains Strength by taking Air, and flaming out; but is extinguiſhed by being ſtifled and ſmother'd. The ſame may be ſaid of *Deſire*, and the reſt; even of *Fear*

SERM. VII. itſelf, though a cold and phlegmatick Paſſion. Only a great and juſt *Grief* (like *Water*) ſwells and rages by being confin'd, and muſt have Vent given it both by Words and Tears. Thus it is at leaſt in the Generality of Conſtitutions. But even this holds true only at the firſt Shock, and for a little time, till Nature has diſcharged a Burden which would otherwiſe overwhelm it: Afterwards, the Remainder of this, as well as all other Paſſions, may and ought to be check'd and reſtrain'd by Thinking and Reflection, by Arguments drawn from Reaſon and Religion.

5*thly*, UNDER the Violence of any Paſſion, (that of *Anger* eſpecially) or ſtrong Temptation to it, we ſhould be infinitely careful of *Speaking* or *Acting*, and very ſlow and backward to ſpeak or act at all. All the Paſſions (that I mention'd eſpecially) are in their Nature *haſty*, and, if we be not exceedingly upon our Guard, will make Us ſo too; And then by one Word or Action we may do more Miſchief in a Moment, than we can repair all the Days of our Lives. To be *deliberate* in every thing we *do* or *ſay*, is a Dictate of *Reaſon*; therefore is directly contrary

contrary to the Dictates of exceſſive *Paſ-* SERM. *ſion*, and by conſequence tends to de- VII. ſtroy it.

6thly, As ſome Men are ſubject to ſome Paſſions by the fine and delicate Turn or Caſt of their Minds, and the Quickneſs and Vivacity of their Thoughts, they ſhould by continual Practice, and the Exerciſe of Reaſon, labour to *harden* themſelves againſt them. To be ſo *ſubject* to them may indeed be an Argument of a *fine* Soul, (as the moſt exquiſite Senſation ſhews the moſt curious Texture of Body) but to *indulge* them is certainly an Argument of a *little* one. 'Tis Softneſs, Effeminacy, and Cowardiſe; which can never be conſiſtent with Wiſdom and true Virtue, however it may with *Ingenuity*. There is a great Difference between *feeling* Pain, and *bearing* Pain; or between ſuffering *abſolutely*, and ſuffering *patiently*: The one is a mere *Sentiment*, the other depends upon *Reaſon*. And nothing will more contribute to our being thus *harden'd* and *fortified*, than,

7thly, CONSIDERING ſeriouſly and deeply, and over and over revolving in our Thoughts, what has been already ſhewn in

ſome

SERM. VII. ſome meaſure, and ſhall now be ſtrengthen'd with additional Obſervations, *viz.* the Miſery and Slavery, the Poorneſs and Littleneſs of Soul, of thoſe who are govern'd *by* their Paſſions, and the bleſſed Freedom, Happineſs, and Magnanimity of thoſe who are Governors *of* them. The *Exceſs* of *any* Paſſion is *preſent Pain* and *Miſery*; even that of *Joy* is ſo, much more that of longing impatient *Deſire*; and yet much more that of *Anger*, *Grief*, and *Fear*: Which laſt is perhaps the worſt of all. *Fear hath Torment*, ſays the Apoſtle*; and a greater Truth was never utter'd. The Exceſſes of them all are *Diſeaſes* of the Mind, and the chief Cauſes of Diſeaſes in the Body; and, by conſequence, next to original Sin, and the Frailty of our Bodies proceeding from it, the chief Cauſes of Death itſelf. A Man of violent Paſſions is continually *ſelf-condemn'd*: For when he is *out* of his Fits he hates himſelf for what he ſaid and did *in* them. The preſent Gratification of exorbitant *Anger* has indeed a Kind of turbulent Pleaſure mix'd with the Pain; but the Conſideration of having gratified it is pure, ſimple,

* 1 John iv. 18.

ſimple, unmix'd Miſery. The *Greatneſs of* SERM. *Mind* which is ſhewn by thus *ruling our Spi-* VII. *rits* has been above taken notice of: And I now add, that it is ſeen in nothing more, than in bravely bearing to be *conquer'd*. Has another been *too hard* for you, as 'tis vulgarly, and very often improperly, expreſs'd? He indeed is *Conqueror*; but if your Cauſe be good, or even reaſonably doubtful, and you bear it like a Man and a Chriſtian, you are *more than Conqueror* *, *through Chriſt that ſtrengthens you* †. He has overcome *you*; but (which is far greater and nobler) you have overcome *yourſelf*. A powerful Prince may in War ſubdue another powerful Prince, yet the former may be a *Slave*, (as he is of the worſt Kind, if he be a Slave to his Vices and Paſſions) and the latter *free*. It *may* be otherwiſe, 'tis true; and in fact generally *is*: For if the laſt-mentioned *raves* and *ſtorms* at his Defeat, or is *ſunk* and *dejected* upon it, he is throughly *conquer'd* indeed. The ſame, in proportion, may be ſaid of all Conteſts whatſoever.

CONSIDER two Perſons *equally* affronted, injured, or abuſed; but either of different Tempers,

* Rom. viii. 37. † Phil. iv. 13.

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Tempers, or differently managing the ſame Temper, (for *Reaſon* and *Conſtitution* are not always rightly diſtinguiſhed, though the *Virtue* of the firſt is always more glorious than the *natural Felicity* of the laſt:) The one gives an Idea of *Fire* lighting upon *green Boughs*, the other upon *Gunpowder*; the one of *Stones* thrown againſt *Wool* or *Down*, the other againſt *Glaſs*. Which of theſe to your Judgment appears the wiſer, the better, and the happier Man of the two?

WERE we to enlarge upon the fatal *Conſequences* and *Effects* of *ungovern'd Paſſion*, we ſhould never have done. 'Tis a *Common Place*, and known to every body: Would to God it were as well conſider'd, as it is known. This we may ſay in general, that moſt of the Uneaſineſſes of our Minds, many of the Pains of our Bodies, moſt of the Troubles and Calamities to particular Perſons, to Families, to Societies, to the Commonwealth, to Mankind, *Murder*, and that the worſt Sort of it in one Reſpect, *Self-Murder*, many ſhameful and ignominious Deaths, proceed from nothing elſe but the ſucceſsful Rebellion of Paſſion againſt Reaſon. The dreadful Effect of which in the

next World, not only in a judicial Senſe, as a Puniſhment from God, but even naturally, as a neceſſary Conſequence, or rather Attendant, in the Nature of Things, has been before briefly taken notice of. What then remains but that with the utmoſt Induſtry and Diligence we make uſe of all the Aids that Reaſon and Religion can afford us, to be truly *Governors* of our *Paſſions*, and *Maſters* of *Ourſelves*; moſt earneſtly beſeeching Him who *purchaſed* * our Souls with his *Blood*, that He would with his *Grace* enable us to *poſſeſs* them?

To Him with the Father, &c.

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* Acts xx. 28.

SERMON

SERMON VIII.

The Government of the THOUGHTS.

The *First* Sermon on this Subject.

PROV. IV. 23.

Keep thy Heart with all Diligence; for out of it are the Issues of Life.

AMONG all the Subjects which employ the *Thoughts* of Men, few are less considered by the Generality of them, than their *Thoughts themselves*: Though none (as I shall shew) can possibly be of greater Importance. This very Text, it is true, has been excellently discussed by a late most Reverend, pious, and learned Prelate *: Excellently, so far as

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* Archbishop *Sharp*, Serm. XIV.

SERM. VIII. as he went; which indeed was far enough, in regard to the Deſign he propoſed. But I ſhall proceed by a different Method, and take a wider Compaſs; diſpatching in a few Words ſuch Parts as he has diſtinctly and fully treated of, and inſiſting chiefly upon thoſe which he has entirely omitted.

WHAT he mainly propoſes (and no Deſign was ever better executed) is to ſhew how far our Thoughts are, and are not, *voluntary*; how far they are, and are not, *ſinful*; and what *we* muſt do to hinder them from being *ſo*. But I ſhall diſcourſe of them not only in a *ſtrictly Religious* and *Theological*, but in a *Moral* and *Prudential* Regard; as they affect our Happineſs and Miſery in *this preſent* World, as well as in that *which is to come*.

THAT by the *Heart* is here meant the *Faculty of Thinking*, and by *Keeping* it, *Regulating* it, muſt be known to all who are acquainted with the Language of Scripture. I obſerve therefore, without further Introduction, that in the Words are contain'd two Things; 1*ſt*, A Precept; *Keep thy Heart with all Diligence*. 2*dly*, A Reaſon of that Precept: *For out of it are the Iſſues of Life*.

Life. As if it had been ſaid, (to ſtrip the Senſe of the figurative Expreſſion) "I Take "the greateſt Care of your *Thoughts*; be- "cauſe from them your Happineſs, or Mi- "ſery, proceeds." I ſay *Miſery*, as well as *Happineſs*: For though the *former* be not mention'd in the Text, yet there is the ſame Reaſon for Contraries: And if *out of the Heart are the Iſſues of Life*, the *Iſſues of Death are ſo too*. I ſhall, for the ſake of Method and Perſpicuity, invert the Order of the Reaſoning as it ſtands in the Text, (the Thing being in effect the ſame) and ſhew, SERM. VIII.

I. THAT our *Happineſs*, or *Miſery*, depends upon our *Thoughts*; and by conſequence that it infinitely concerns us carefully to watch their *Motions*, and keep them under due *Regulation*.

II. WHAT the *Regulation* of them implies. And

III. HOW, or by what *Means*, they are to be *regulated*.

I. IN the *Firſt* Place then, I will endeavour to ſhew, That our *Happineſs*, or *Miſery*,

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ſery, depends upon our *Thoughts*, &c. *Out of* the Heart *are the Iſſues of Life*, or Death: Therefore *keep thy Heart with all Diligence*. The *Heart*, i. e. the *Faculty of Thinking*, is the *Source* and *Fountain* of every thing that is properly *ours*. All our Actions proceed *from* it; and our *Happineſs*, or *Miſery*, terminates *in* it. As all the *Blood* in our Bodies iſſues from the *Heart*, and returns to it again; ſo all our good and bad *Actions* iſſue from the *Thinking Faculty*, and return to it again in *Happineſs* or *Miſery*; that Faculty being at once the *Spring*, and the *Seat* of *both*. With regard to *Conſequences*, the Caſe is ſelf-evident: Whatever is *morally good* or *evil*, *profitable* or *pernicious* to us, *proceeds* from the *Heart* or *Thinking Faculty*, and is the *Effect* of a *right* or *wrong Thought*. Upon this all our *future Virtue* or *Vice*, all our *future Happineſs* or *Miſery*, entirely depends. Our Bleſſed Saviour aſſures us, that *out of the Abundance of the Heart the Mouth ſpeaketh. A good Man out of the good Treaſure of the Heart bringeth forth good things, and an evil Man out of the evil Treaſure bringeth forth evil things* *. And in another Place,

* Matth. xii. 34, 35. and Luke vi. 45.

Place, *Out of the Heart proceed evil Thoughts, Murders, Adulteries, Fornications, Thefts, falſe Witneſs, Blaſphemies* *. And yet this, though of the utmoſt *Importance*, is not *all:* Even as to the *preſent*, and our *actual Sentiments*, the Caſe is the ſame: All turns upon *preſent, actual Thinking*; and that, *1ſt*, As to a *good* or *bad Choice*, or, in other Words, *Virtue* and *Vice*; *2dly*, As to *preſent Pleaſure* or *Pain, Happineſs* or *Miſery*. For the *Firſt*, it is certain that concerning one and the ſame Thing we very often, I wiſh I could not ſay for the moſt part, judge *habitually right*, and yet *actually wrong*. In our cool Thoughts whenever we happen to think upon this or that, we fully determine that we ſhould not do it; and yet, when a ſtrong Temptation ſolicits us, we judge otherwiſe, becauſe we actually do it: For ſhould we actually do what we actually judge it is better for us not to do, we ſhould chuſe Evil *as* Evil, which is impoſſible. The only Fault and Miſery is, that in this *Trial*, by the Prevalency of our Paſſions and ſenſual Appetite, which we might keep in better Order if we would, the Evidence is falſely

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* Matth. xv. 19.

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repreſented; the *Witneſſes*, i. e. the *Arguments*, are *produced* and *ſtrongly urged* on the one Side, and *abſent* or *almoſt ſilenced* on the other; and ſo the *Judge*, i. e. our *preſent actual Underſtanding*, determines, though *wrong* as to the *Merits* of the Cauſe, yet *right* as to the *Evidence* which is before him. For the *Second*, According to the Opinions of ſome Writers, *Senſation* itſelf, at leaſt in *Men*, is one Kind of *Thinking*; and even ſenſible Pleaſure, or Pain, is an eaſy or an uneaſy Thought. But waving this, ſince theſe Thoughts, if they are ſo, are capable of little Regulation, many Goods and Evils depend purely upon *Thought*, all in a *great meaſure*: Some are entirely made, others much increaſed or diminiſhed, by it. What a Multitude of Pleaſures and Pains are there which are nothing but Creatures of the Mind, and different Turns or Modifications of *Thinking*! How delightful is *mere Contemplation* to the contemplative Perſon, eſpecially if he be a religious Perſon too! Even to one of little or no intellectual Improvements great may be the Pleaſure of *meditating* upon the Works of Nature, and the adorable Perfections of the Deity; beſides innu-

innumerable innocent Amuſements of Mind, which are no ſmall Parts of an innocent Man's preſent Happineſs. On the contrary, what a Multitude of Pains and Uneaſineſſes are there, which are altogether fantaſtical, and wholly of our own making! Such are, for example, perplexing Solicitudes, and groundleſs Fears of what will never happen. But further: Conſider a Man in Happineſs or Miſery, as it is vulgarly eſtimated; 'tis not his Wealth, his Honour, *&c.* that makes his *Happineſs*; nor his Poverty, his Diſgrace, *&c.* that makes his *Miſery*: 'Tis his *Thoughts* upon them that make the one, or the other. They are indeed *accidentally* occaſioned by theſe Externals, but *properly* reſide in our own Minds. And that they are no more than accidentally occaſioned by the former is plain, becauſe our inward Reflections may be ſo managed, or miſmanaged, that preſent Happineſs may reſult from Poverty and Diſgrace, and preſent Miſery from Riches and Honour. Nay farther yet: Even *ſenſible* Pleaſure or Pain, though they be real, and chiefly ariſe from the Mechaniſm of our Bodies as united with our Souls, may yet be in ſome Degree in-

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II. WHAT

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II. WHAT that *Regulation* implies, is the *Second* Thing to be conſidered. It implies then,

1*ſt*, BEING infinitely careful to get our *Conceptions* of Things rightly adjuſted, and our *Judgments* rightly informed. This is plain of itſelf: If our Conceptions and Judgments be wrong, we are wrong in every thing. *If the Light that is in thee be Darkneſs, how great is that Darkneſs!* *

2*dly*, NOT *indulging*, but carefully *ſuppreſſing*, any Thoughts which are *ſinful*. Though we commonly, and juſtly, diſtinguiſh between *Thoughts*, *Words*, and *Actions*, yet in one Senſe, as they are all in our own Power, and capable of being morally good or evil, they may all be term'd *Actions*. As it has been ſaid in Law, *ſcribere eſt agere*, to write is to act; ſo to *ſpeak* is to *act*, and to *think* is to *act*: A *Thought* being an *inward Action*, as an *Action* commonly ſo call'd, *i. e.* an *outward* one, is a Conſequence of a Thought. Some *Modes* of Thinking indeed are *involuntary*; and the Mind is *paſſive*, not *active*, with relation to them: But in others, it

* Matth. vi. 23.

SERM. VIII. it is certain that the Man is an *Agent* in *Thinking*, as well as in *Acting*, according to the vulgar Uſe of that Word. The Queſtion then here will be, how far a *Thought* is, and how far it is not, *ſinful*.

IT muſt be allow'd, that the *firſt Motions* towards *Sin*, the *Motus primò primi*, as the *Schools* call them, are *ſinful* in one Senſe, *viz.* as they are *Deviations* and *Obliquities* from the Law of God, as they are Effects of our *natural Corruption*, and partake of *original Tranſgreſſion*: But they are not *actual* and *formal Sins*, becauſe they are *involuntary*, and belong more to the *Body*, than to the *Mind*. I ſpeak of Perſons who are not in a *Habit* of thoſe Sins to which theſe Motions tend: For to thoſe who are, the more than ordinary Frequency at leaſt even of theſe Motions may be imputed as Sin; becauſe it ariſes from that *Habit*, which was contracted by their own Fault. But ſetting aſide this, the Caſe is as I ſtated it. And the ſame may in effect be ſaid of *all bad Thoughts* which *thruſt themſelves* upon us we know not how; ſince we are not *active in* them, but *paſſive from* them. And this may be an Anſwer to many well-diſpoſed

diſpoſed Perſons, who complain that they are troubled with *evil Thoughts* of another Kind, not of a *ſenſual*, but of a *ſpiritual* Nature. *Evil* they are in *themſelves*, and as they are injected into our Minds by the great Enemy of God, and Goodneſs, and the Souls of Men: But they are not ſo *to us*, (not *morally* evil, I mean) unleſs they gain our *Affections*, or our *Wills*: And in this Senſe thoſe who ſay they are *troubled* with *evil Thoughts* may conclude that they are *not evil*, for that very Reaſon, becauſe they are *troubleſome*. Or if they *will* call them *evil* Thoughts, let them take it thus: They are not *their* Thoughts, being *forced* upon them againſt their Wills. I mean, they are not *their* Thoughts in an *active* Senſe, ſo as to be imputable to them: They are *theirs*, as the *Pains* they feel are theirs; but they are no more their *Guilt*, than the Stab of a Sword, or the Burning of a Fever, is their Guilt. Thus I ſay they may take it; but the other Anſwer is better. Theſe Thoughts (to uſe the Language of the *Schools* once more) are *materially* ſinful, but not *formally*; i. e. ſinful *in their own Nature*, but not to *us*, or not chargeable upon SERM. VIII.

SERM. VIII. upon us as Sins; which they cannot be, unleſs our Affections or Wills cloſe in with them. And this brings us to ſhew *when*, and *how far*, our Thoughts are *really* unlawful. They are ſo then,

1*ſt*, WHEN, being *evil in themſelves*, they are *entertain'd* by us with *Pleaſure* and *Delight*, though not *intended* to be reduced into *Practice*. This is evident, becauſe it ſhews a vicious and debauch'd Temper of Mind, and becauſe the Scripture forbids all impure and unholy Motions to be *harbour'd* in our Breaſts. Theſe are not only *Tendencies* to greater Crimes, but highly criminal in *themſelves*, and chargeable upon us, as being *voluntary*, and *delightful* to us. *Whoſoever looketh*, or even thinketh, *upon a Woman to luſt after her*, *hath* in ſome meaſure *committed Adultery with her already in his Heart* *; and that even though he do not *deſign* to commit it farther, but only takes Pleaſure and Delight in the *Thoughts* of it. But the Guilt is much greater if he *do deſign* to commit it; and therefore,

2*dly*, THOSE Thoughts are yet more ſinful, which proceed to a *formed Reſolution* of doing

* Matth. v. 28.

doing any thing unlawful. Here is the full and entire Conſent of the Will; and the Sin is *finiſhed*, ſo far as it can be in *Thought*. The Man is *directly* and *completely* a Criminal, though he never proceeds to *outward Action*; ſince even that can be prevented by nothing but Want of Power and Opportunity. If he proceeds to outward Action, the Sin is indeed *greater*. But is it ſo? it will be ſaid: For here a Queſtion ariſes. If a Man fully *reſolves* to do a wicked Thing, and is hinder'd from it by nothing but Want of Power and Opportunity, is he not as guilty as if he had *actually* done it? Some indeed have determined that he *is:* But I cannot be of that Opinion. *Guilty* enough he is, God knows: Enough to ruin his immortal Soul, unleſs he ſeverely repents and reforms. But ſtill there are *Degrees* of *Guilt* in *this* World, as there will be of *Puniſhment* in the *next:* And though the *Intention* of the *Heart* be a *great Matter*, nay the *main* Matter of all, yet ſure the *Commiſſion* of the Sin in the *outward Act* is *ſomething* ſuperadded to it. Here, however, is Room for a Diſtinction. If the Reſolution be only *general*, ſo that the Perſon only ſays to himſelf, SERM. VIII.

SERM. VIII. himſelf, *I will do this if I can*; and yet forbears, no Opportunity *happening to fall in his way:* Then I think the Caſe is as I ſaid; he is not ſo guilty as if he had done it. But if he actually ſets upon the Work, attempts it with all his Might, and is only hinder'd from it by Want of Power; I cannot ſay but that in the Sight of God he is full as guilty, and will be as ſeverely puniſhed, as if he had completely executed his Deſign: Becauſe, *as far as in him lay*, he *actually did* it; and I am not ſure that his going further would have added any thing to his Guilt or Puniſhment. But this is Matter of nice Speculation; and it is ſufficient to determine, that when the Will comes to a thorough *Reſolution* of Sinning, the Man is *thoroughly* and *completely* a Sinner. As to thoſe Sins which are *purely mental*, as *Pride*, *Envy*, and the like; the Caſe is plain of itſelf, that they are finiſhed and completed in *Thought*. I only obſerve further upon this Article, that, as Contraries explain each other, the ſame is here to be ſaid of *good* Thoughts, as of *bad* ones. As the firſt Motions towards *Sin* are not *to us* ſinful, ſo the firſt Motions towards *Virtue* are not *to us* virtuous: As God

God will *puniſh* the Will for the Deed, ſo he will *reward* the Will for the Deed: As *Delectation* in the *Affections* and *Conſent* in the *Will* make our Thoughts *vicious*, ſo they make them *virtuous:* And as ſome *Vices* are wholly *mental*, ſo are ſome *Virtues*. SERM. VIII.

3*dly*, THE Regulation of our Thoughts implies *carefully attending to their firſt Motions*, and preventing, as much as poſſible, the very Beginnings, Approaches, and Inſinuations of Sin. This is ſtrictly and moſt properly *Keeping our Hearts:* Keeping them, i. e. *ſetting a Guard* upon them, *narrowly watching* their Motions, and *taking the Alarm* at the very Appearance of Danger. If this Point be well ſecured, all is ſafe. And though (as I ſaid under the foregoing Particular) the firſt involuntary Tendencies towards Sin in our Souls be not to us ſinful, yet ſtill *Tendencies* to Sin they are: And if they be not immediately check'd and reſtrain'd, they become *ſinful* in themſelves, and are likely to be productive of far greater Miſchiefs. The progreſſive Advance of Sin, and its Conſequences, is excellently repreſented by the Apoſtle St. *James*. *When Luſt hath conceived, it bringeth forth Sin;*

and

SERM. VIII. *and Sin, when it is finiſhed, bringeth forth Death**. But if *Luſt* be not ſuffered to *conceive*, or *Sin* be ſtifled in the *Embryo*, it is impoſſible that *Sin* ſhould *bring forth Death.*

4*thly*, THE *Keeping of our Hearts*, or the *Government* of our *Thoughts*, implies *more particularly*, *directly*, and *immediately*, *regulating* them, with regard, 1*ſt*, To our *Actions*, *Paſſions*, and *Words*; 2*dly*, To our *preſent Happineſs* and *Miſery*. And *how this* and *all other Regulation* of them is to be *perform'd*, or *how* we are to *manage* and *conduct* ourſelves in order to it, is

III. THE *Third* and *Laſt* Thing to be conſidered: And this indeed is the moſt difficult Point of all. That our Thoughts are partly in our Power, and partly not, has been already obſerved. *What it is to think*, or *how it is performed*, the moſt accurate Thinker was never yet able to explain; nor ſhall we ever attain to that Knowledge while we are in theſe Bodies, if ever we do at all. To diſtinguiſh the *Motions* of *God's Holy Spirit* on the one hand,

* James i. 15.

hand, and thoſe of the *Devil* on the other, from our *own Thoughts*, is likewiſe, ordinarily ſpeaking, impoſſible. Certain it is from Reaſon and Scripture in conjunction, that there are ſuch Things as all three; and that we cannot *diſtinguiſh* them, is nothing ſtrange; ſince (as I ſaid) we do not ſo much as know *what Thinking is*. What makes true and juſt Thinking ſo difficult is the perpetual Struggle between the *Animal* and *Rational* Part of our Conſtitution; the *Luſting of the Fleſh againſt the Spirit, and of the Spirit againſt the Fleſh*, as the Apoſtle * expreſſes it. However, our Thoughts are in a great meaſure *free*, in a great meaſure under *Government*, and capable of *Regulation*: Otherwiſe we ſhould not be *Free Agents*, as we certainly are. We find by *Experience* that in fact it is ſo; that we are generally at Liberty to think, or not to think, upon this or that: As it will appear from the Conſideration of thoſe *Rules* which I am going to lay down for the *Regulation* of our *Thoughts*.

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THESE ſhall be of *Two* Kinds; the *Firſt* relating to ſuch Things as *by conſequence* affect

* Gal. v. 17.

SERM. VIII. fect our Thoughts; the *Second* to ſuch as *directly* and *immediately* regulate and adjuſt them. Of the former Kind I ſhall lay down *Five*, and the firſt is this.

1. To *propoſe* a *right* and *true End* of our Actions in general. And what ſhould that be, but the Glory of God, and the Salvation of our own Souls? For thoſe two are in effect one and the ſame Thing. This, like a well-proportion'd Weight hung to a Machine, will give a juſt and regular Motion to all the Wheels that are within it. To this we may very well apply that of our Bleſſed Saviour, though not exactly in the ſame Senſe: *Where your Treaſure is, there will your* HEART *be alſo* *. This *general Principle* will have ſuch an Influence upon all our *particular Thoughts*, and they again upon our *particular Actions*, that our Deviations from our Duty, and the true Way to Happineſs, will not be many and conſiderable. I ſay, *many* and *conſiderable*: For there may be *ſome*, and yet all be ſafe too. If a Traveller go a little out of his Road, it matters not much: If he be going to a *right* Place, and make no *conſiderable* Deviation, all

* Matth. vi. 21.

all is well: But if he be going to a *wrong* *Place*, he is always in the wrong; even though he be in the *right Way*, which leads to the Place he deſigns. SERM. VIII.

2. IT will greatly contribute to the *Regulation* of our Thoughts, to live under a conſtant and awful Senſe of this great Truth, that *God is privy to them*, and knows them even *better* than ourſelves. We are always careful of our *Words*, and *Actions*, in the Preſence of thoſe who have Authority and Power to *puniſh* or *reward* us; nay, in ſome meaſure, in the Preſence of *any* Perſon whatſoever, for fear of *Shame* and *Diſgrace*, or ſome other Miſchief that may happen to us: And we ſhould be altogether as careful of our *Thoughts*, did we but duly conſider that *they* are as well known to *God*, as our *Words* and *Actions* can be to *Men*. And we ſhould be more careful, than we generally are, of all three, were we but truly ſenſible of God's continual Preſence with us, and Inſpection over us.

3. IT will much contribute to the ſame End, to fix in our Minds a ſincere ingenuous *Love* of *Truth* in general, and a *Deteſtation* of *Error* and *Falſhood*. I ſpeak this

SERM. VIII. with a particular View to thoſe who *dally* and *trifle* with Truth and Falſhood; affecting, in Converſation, to oppoſe what they believe to be right, purely to ſhew their Parts, and their extraordinary Skill in Diſputation; though under a Pretence of Freedom from Prejudice, and a Deſire to be better inform'd. This greatly tends to make our Thoughts irregular and erroneous: Many a one has diſputed himſelf into the *Belief* of a Thing *falſe* in itſelf, or the *Diſbelief* of a Thing *true* in itſelf, or (which is more likely) into abſolute *Scepticiſm*, and neither believing nor diſbelieving any thing at all. To be free from Prejudice truly and properly ſo call'd, to examine every thing impartially before we yield our Aſſent, and even after that to be patient of Oppoſition, and ready to ſatisfy the Objections of others, is, no doubt, highly commendable; and we cannot act like rational Creatures without it: But ſtill every thing muſt *have an End*, and we muſt *fix* upon *ſomething* one time or other: But to diſpute for diſputing's ſake, and thus to *ſport* with *Truth* and *Falſhood*, is *criminal* and *dangerous*, both

both in the Nature of the *Thing* itſelf, and with regard to the *juſt Judgment of God.* SERM. VIII.

4. ANOTHER Rule is to *avoid Idleneſs*, and be always religiouſly, uſefully, or at leaſt innocently *employ'd.* If we be not, our Thoughts will certainly be irregular: For though the *Man*, comparatively or *relatively* ſpeaking, may be *idle*, yet his *Mind* cannot be *abſolutely* ſo. The Mind is an *active Principle*; and if it be not buſied about what is *good*, or *indifferent*, it will infallibly be buſied about what is *bad.*

5. IN order to keep a ſtrict Watch or Guard upon our *Thoughts*, we muſt keep one upon our *Senſes*, eſpecially thoſe of which the *Eyes* and *Ears* are the *Organs*; as alſo upon the *Fancy* or *Imagination*. *How* theſe *affect* and *influence* each other, or *how* the *Fancy* or *Imagination* is diſtinct from the *Underſtanding*, it is not my Buſineſs at this Time to enquire; nor is it, in order to *Practice*, very material for us to know. Evident it is, that the Senſes are the Inlets of many of our Ideas; and that to what we call the *Imagination* an Infinity of *Phantaſms* or *Pictures* of Things is from Time to Time repreſented. How greatly theſe

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muſt and do affect our *Thoughts*, as we are *active in* them, with reſpect to *lawful* and *unlawful*, and as we are *paſſive from* them, with reſpect to our preſent *Happineſs* or *Miſery*, is no leſs evident. Next to a ſound *Judgment* a ſound *Imagination* is the greateſt Bleſſing: And with this Faculty of the Mind we may here juſtly mention another, and that is the *Memory*. Nor is the Art of *Remembring* perhaps more conſiderable than the Art of *Forgetting*: The *Guilt* of *Remembring*, I am ſure, is often very great: It always is, when a Man takes Pleaſure in reviving the *Ideas* of his former Vices; and Many there are, who are lewd and debauched in *Thought* only, becauſe they are no longer able to be ſo in *Action*. Whereas, in truth, all Sinners, whether they are, or are not, capable of acting their Sins over again, are bound, both in Duty and Intereſt, carefully to *forget* them; I mean, the *Pleaſure* of them: For they ſhould as carefully *remember* the *Facts themſelves*, becauſe that is the Way to prevail with *God* to *forget* them, or, in another Word, to *forgive* them; this latter being the only *Oblivion* of which his Nature is capable. If it be aſked, *How*

ſhall

ſhall we do this? What do theſe *nice Diſtinctions* ſignify, when applied to *Practice?* And *how* ſhall we *in fact* diſtinguiſh between the *Pleaſure*, and the *Thing* which *cauſed* it? I anſwer, I hope to make it appear before I have done, particularly under the Articles of *ſeparating*, *uniting*, and *tranſferring* Thoughts, that theſe Diſtinctions are not ſo very *nice* as ſome may imagine; that they are founded upon common Reaſon and Senſe, very reducible to Practice, and to be apprehended by an ordinary Capacity, provided it be accompanied with an honeſt Mind, ſincerely willing and deſirous to be inſtructed. Our Senſes therefore, and theſe Faculties of our Minds, *Imagination* and *Memory*, being kept under good Government, the *Underſtanding* is the more likely to judge right; and when it does, the *Will* and *Affections* are right of courſe. SERM. VIII.

To theſe Directions might be added *another*; which is, That in order to regulate our *Thoughts*, we ſhould look well to the Health and Conſtitution of our *Bodies*; the one, eſpecially in the Caſe of *Melancholy*, having ſo great an Influence upon the other, that *Mens ſana in Corpore ſano* is the Whole

SERM. VIII. of human Happineſs. But this belonging to another *Profeſſion*, I paſs it over, and ſhall proceed in my next Diſcourſe to the *Second* Claſs of Rules I would lay down concerning the Management of our Thoughts, *viz.* ſuch as relate to Things which more *directly* and *immediately* tend to regulate and adjuſt them.

SERMON

SERMON IX.

The Government of the THOUGHTS.

The *Second* Sermon on this Subject.

PROV. IV. 23.

Keep thy Heart with all Diligence; for out of it are the Iſſues of Life.

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I AM now to proceed to the *Second* Claſs of Rules concerning the Management of our Thoughts, *viz.* ſuch as relate to Things which more *directly* and *immediately* tend to regulate and adjuſt them.

1. AND the *firſt* is this: To procure a thoughtful *Temper* and *Habit* of Mind. Thoſe, generally ſpeaking, think *moſt irregularly*, who think *leaſt:* I ſay, *generally ſpeaking*; for there are Extremes in moſt

SERM. IX. things: And in this, as in other Inſtances, we may be exceſſive, as well as defective. Some by too much Thought have over-ſet their Underſtandings; and to melancholy Perſons the beſt Advice we can give is to *think* as *little* as they *can*. But moſt commonly the Fault is on the other Side. How many Thouſands are there of the Rational Species, who, ſetting aſide the common Cares of Life, think little more than the Brutes; not at all to any Purpoſe, unleſs it be by their Imprudence and Guilt to make themſelves miſerable, both here and hereafter. I do not expect that the Bulk of Mankind ſhould be Philoſophers, or deep Divines: But they certainly ought to employ the Faculties of their Minds, the Reaſon which God has given them, much more than they do. For if it be aſk'd, *how* they ſhall procure the Habit I am ſpeaking of; I anſwer, as all other Habits are procured, by *Practice* and *Exerciſe*. And for their Aſſiſtance in *Thinking*, let them exerciſe themſelves in *Reading*; for we do not mean that their Thoughts ſhould be continually ſpinning out of their own Bowels, without any Supplies from Abroad; like thoſe

thoſe of our modern *fine Thinkers* in their own Conceits, who deſpiſe *Learning* because they have *none*. This is the Way to make our Thoughts *prey upon themſelves*, and inſtead of *regulating* them, to *ſpoil* and *exhauſt* them. *Meditation* and *Reading* muſt be joined with each other, and *friendly Conference* with *both*. And nothing ſhould more employ our Meditation, than the *prevailing Corruptions* of our Nature, eſpecially THE *Sin which* (as the Apoſtle * ſpeaks) *doth moſt eaſily beſet us*; that we may always be upon our Guard againſt them, and preſently take the Alarm, whenever we are aſſaulted by any Temptation to them. SERM. IX.

2. To *have our Thoughts about us* (as it is commonly expreſſed) will not a little conduce to the Regulation of them. *Preſence of Mind* (as it is more ſtrongly and elegantly expreſſed) is a vaſt Advantage, conſidering the Dangers to which we are every Moment expoſed. *Let your Loins be girt about, and your Lights burning*, ſays our Bleſſed Saviour †: And we may to this Purpoſe apply that of the Apoſtle ‡, though in a Senſe ſomewhat different, *Be ye always* READY

* Heb. xii. 1. † Luke xii. 35. ‡ 1 Pet. iii. 15.

SERM. IX. READY *to give an Anſwer* to every Sort of Temptation, *Reſponſare cupidinibus*, in the Words of a * Heathen Writer. *Preſence of Mind* indeed, according to the common Acceptation, is but another Phraſe for *Courage*, and it is certain that the *Want of it* proceeds from nothing more than *Fear* and *Cowardice*; but not from that *only*. Preſence of Mind implies ſomething beſides Courage, and the Want of it ſomething beſides Cowardice. It has the *concupiſcible*, as well as the *iraſcible* Affections for it's Object, if I may be once more permitted to ſpeak in the uncouth, though very uſeful, Language of the *Schools*, becauſe I here know not well how to ſpeak otherwiſe. But to explain my Meaning more at large to thoſe who are not acquainted with theſe Terms: Whether our Virtue be aſſaulted by ſomething *terrible* to us, or by ſomething *pleaſant*, but *forbidden*, it behoves us to have our Thoughts always in Readineſs, and prepared at the firſt Call, immediately to come to our Aſſiſtance. Yes, it may again be objected: All this is fairly ſaid; but *how* ſhall it be put in Practice? What is this but talking in *Metaphor*, from which ſolid Reaſoning is quite

* HORACE, Sat. 7. Lib. ii.

quite different? Is a Man diſtinct from his own Thoughts, as a General is from his Soldiers; and can thoſe be *commanded* by the one, as theſe are by the other? I anſwer again, That we do not know *what Thinking is*, i. e. *how* it is *performed*; but yet we are certain that ſuch a Thing there *is*, and that it is capable of being *regulated* by us too. We find it by *Experience*, as I ſaid before: I am ſure I find it ſo. As to talking in *Metaphor*, we muſt talk ſo, if conſtrain'd by the Nature of the Subject we cannot talk otherwiſe: And it has been well obſerved, by the acuteſt Writers upon the Nature and Workings of *Human Underſtanding*, that through the Imperfection and Scantineſs of that Underſtanding we are forced to borrow Words from the Ideas of ſenſible Things, even when applied to thoſe which are of a quite contrary Nature. However that be, it is moſt certain, and verify'd by *Experience*, that by *Practice*, *Exerciſe*, and *Cuſtom*, we may *reduce* our Thoughts into ſuch *Order*, and have them in ſuch a *Readineſs*, as rarely to be ſurprized either by the Fear of *Pain*, or the Solicitations of *Pleaſure*.

SERM. IX.

3. Be-

SERM. IX. 3. BEFORE we ſpeak, or act, let us always *think what it is* that we are about to *ſay* or *do:* This will *curb* our *Paſſions*, and *rectify* our *Actions*. And as plain and eaſy as this may ſeem, ſcarce any thing is leſs regarded. No ſmall Miſchief to themſelves, as well as to others, is continually done by thoſe *who meant no Harm:* They meant *no Harm* indeed, becauſe they meant *Nothing*. A peeviſh Word, or a raſh Action, which was peeviſh, or raſh, probably, becauſe it was not attended with *Thought*, has often been the Occaſion of a thouſand *uneaſy Thoughts*, of many ſubſequent *Errors* and *Sins*.

4. SINCE (as we have ſeen) our good or bad Choice entirely depends upon our *preſent actual* Sentiments, and Judgments of Things, it infinitely concerns us to have *our Thoughts about us* in the very *Article of Temptation*, when it is the *Time* to *act*, or *not to act*. Here we muſt exert the whole Energy of our Souls, and put forth all the Force and Powers of Thinking. This is the Day of Battle; and then ſure is the Time to uſe our Arms with the utmoſt Vigour,

Vigour, with the greateſt Dexterity and Skill. SERM. IX.

*Nunc animis opus eſt, nunc pectore firmo.**

For theſe Words may be applied not to *Courage* only, but to all the Faculties of the Soul in *general*. The *Fleſh* and the *Spirit* are now ſtruggling and puſhing for the Victory. And if, our Thoughts being now rightly apply'd, we ſhall certainly judge, and conſequently act *right*; otherwiſe, we ſhall as certainly judge, and conſequently act *wrong*, (as I have ſhewn we *ſhall*); it follows, that it is of the utmoſt Moment to have them rightly directed *now*, *viz.* in the very Article of Trial and Danger. *How* that is to be done will appear from the next Rule I ſhall propoſe. Though perhaps in this Caſe it is better and ſafer to *fly* than to *fight*: For in this War, though not in others, † *Fugere eſt triumphus*, to *eſcape* is to *conquer*. My Meaning is, that though it be highly laudable and glorious to ſubdue the Temptation by Dint of Argument from Reaſon and Religion, and ſometimes, it may be, there is no other Way; yet

* VIRG. Æn. vi. † HORACE.

SERM. IX. yet conſidering, that generally ſpeaking at leaſt, *ſenſible* Things make deeper Impreſſions upon us than *ſpiritual*, it is ſafeſt not to draw up the Arguments in Array on both Sides juſt at that Time: For though to be ſure they are in themſelves, and in the Truth of Things, always ſtrongeſt on the *right* Side (otherwiſe it would not *be* the right); yet thoſe on the *other* are apt to make the deepeſt Impreſſion upon the Fancy and Imagination, and the ſenſitive Part, even *by being thought upon*; which the very *Compariſon*, or *Competition*, we are ſpeaking of ſuppoſes them to be. And therefore I ſay, it may be more prudent to *divert our Thoughts* to ſome other Subject, to *turn away our Eyes*, or *leave the Place*, if the tempting Object be *external* and *preſent* before us. If it be only in *Imagination*, and we are *alone*, even then it may be beſt to leave the Place, and change our Solitude for Company; or if that cannot well be done, to *transfer our Thoughts* to ſome other Subject. Which laſt is a Part of the *next* Rule I would lay down: And therefore

5. IT is of the laſt Importance to avoid *confuſed*, *indeterminate*, *partial*, Thinking; and

and habituate ourſelves to that which is *cloſe*, *compact*, *diſtinct*, and, as much as may be, *complete*; to *unite*, or *ſeparate* our Thoughts, as Occaſion requires, and *tranſfer* them from one Thing to another. It is here again as in War, and the Exerciſe of military Diſcipline; which requires that the Soldiers ſhould not be huddled and crowded together, but *regularly* ranged into Order, neither ſtanding too near, nor at too great a Diſtance; prompt and expedite to turn in a Moment from one Hand to the other; to cloſe or open, as Occaſion requires; not to ſtray or ſtraggle; and above all Things to be expert and dextrous at the Uſe of their Arms. This, in the moſt ſtrict and proper Senſe, is *governing* and *regulating* our Thoughts. The Non-obſervance of this Rule (which I confeſs, but I could not well contrive it otherwiſe, is of a *complicated* Nature, and contains *many* in *one*) is the everlaſting Source of Error, Sin, and Miſery. I ſhall give ſome *few* Inſtances; for it is impoſſible to produce *all* upon this infinite, inexhauſtible Subject. Many there are in the World, who all their Lives long have labour'd under a certain *nameleſs*, *general*, SERM. IX.

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ral, indeterminate, habitual *Uneaſineſs* of Thought; every one of whom, if he ſhould be aſk'd that Queſtion of the *Danites* to *Micah*, * *What aileth thee?* would find himſelf at a great Loſs for an Anſwer. Let ſuch a one but frequently aſk *himſelf*, *What aileth thee?* and nothing will ail him. Let him think *cloſely* and *diſtinctly*, *unravel* and *diſintangle* his Thoughts, and his Uneaſineſs will be over. Again; we are often deterred from undertaking many uſeful and ſome neceſſary Things, purely by the Appearance of inſuperable *Difficulties*; which altogether proceed from our viewing them at a Diſtance in a *Jumble* of *Ideas*, without any due *Separation* of Parts, any *diſtinct* or *determinate* Conception.

MANY more Evils are cured by *cloſe* and *diſtinct* Thinking, and by *ſhifting* our Thoughts from *one* Thing to *another*. Thoſe, for Example, who are in mean Circumſtances, are apt to be uneaſy whenever they reflect upon them: But they would be much leſs, if at all, ſo, did they but *change the Scene*, (which they may do if they pleaſe) by conſidering the many *Bleſſings*

* Judges xviii. 23.

ſings they *enjoy*, and the far *worſe Condition* of many *others*. The Wealth and Honour of this or that Man give them Regret, by making them wiſh that they themſelves were as rich and powerful. This is to be remedied by reflecting upon the *Vanity of the World*, the *Temptations* to which *great* Perſons, *as ſuch*, are expoſed, and the many preſent *Troubles*, which their Greatneſs itſelf occaſions. There are ſome Seeds of *Envy* in the Nature of moſt, if not all Men; ſo far at leaſt, that though they do not repine at another's Advantages, or wiſh them leſſened, yet with ſome *Uneaſineſs* they wiſh their own increas'd, upon hearing that theirs are ſo. At leaſt they are apt to be a little diſturb'd upon ſuch Intelligence, or ſuch a Proſpect. This is Matter of daily Obſervation in our Acquaintance with the World, and is a Vein of original Sin: But this Corruption is to be conquer'd by conſidering that either that Other's Proſperity obſtructs not *ours*; or, if it does, vexing and diſquieting ourſelves mends not the Matter, but makes it worſe: Let *Good-Nature* and *Chriſtian Charity* take place, we ſhall rejoice with our Neighbour, and by

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SERM. IX. that means be more happy ourſelves. Upon this I cannot but obſerve, in one Word, that nothing is more apt to make our *Thoughts uneaſy* to us, than *Narrowneſs of Spirit*, and a *ſelfiſh Temper*.

BUT under this Head are chiefly to be conſider'd thoſe Plagues of our Nature, inordinate *Grief* and *Fear*: To which a very great Part of our preſent Miſery is owing; And that again is owing to nothing but want of *juſt* and *due Thinking*. I ſay, *inordinate* Grief and Fear: For all the *Paſſions* are *in themſelves naturally good*, as tending to our Preſervation and Happineſs in both Worlds. And though all *Exceſs* of them be both naturally and morally evil, yet *ſome* of it there will be; and it is not in our Power to prevent it: But we may prevent the *great* Exceſs, the unreaſonable, enormous *Extravagance* of them. We find by Experience that we can, and often do: And indeed if we could not, we ſhould not be *free Agents*; and both Reaſon and Religion would be mere Names without Meaning.

FOR the *firſt* of theſe Paſſions: To indulge *Grief*, unleſs it be for our *Sins*, (and that

that is a Pain attended with Pleaſure) is ab- SERM.
ſolutely irrational and abſurd. The Thing IX.
is gone, and loſt, and paſt Recovery: Our
Sorrow for it will do us no *Good*, and its
Exceſs will do us much *Miſchief*. But *how*
ſhall we cure it? I acknowledge it cannot
be done *immediately*, and I do not propoſe
ſo wild a Project. But it may be done in
no very conſiderable Time, by calling off
our Minds from the beloved loſt Object,
turning them to ſomething elſe, and not
ſuffering them to hug the Carcaſs, or ra-
ther the Phantom of our departed Pleaſure;
by *uniting* and *contracting* ſome Thoughts,
and *ſeparating* and *diſintangling* others; by
Arguments drawn both from our Duty and
Intereſt. And to ſhew that this *is practi-
cable*, ſuppoſe a *Man*, or (to put it upon
the weaker Sex, for the greater Strength of
the Suppoſition) a *Woman* to have loſt a be-
loved Child. The *Image* of him, we ſhall
be told, will be continually thruſting itſelf
upon her, and ſhe can *think* of *nothing elſe*.
I grant the *firſt*, but deny the *laſt*. That
Idea, I own, will be perpetually intruding;
but ſtill ſhe may think upon ſomething elſe:
She may think upon her *Sins*, which have

SERM. IX. *deſerved* this Puniſhment, and upon the *Bleſſings* ſhe ſtill enjoys, and does *not deſerve*; may conſider, that *Afflictions*, if made a good Uſe of, will turn to our *Benefit*; if otherwiſe, to our *greater Affliction:* In ſhort, ſhe may think upon *God*, as well as upon her *dead Child*; and the more ſhe does upon the one, the leſs ſhe will upon the other. I might enlarge upon this Head, by inſtancing in the *uniting* and *ſeparating* of Thoughts: But that would be too *particular* for the *Limits*, and indeed for the *Nature*, of ſuch Diſcourſes as theſe.

INORDINATE *Fear* is no leſs irrational than inordinate *Grief*, and no leſs capable of being reduced and governed by our *Thoughts*. Nay, it is even more abſurd than that: Becauſe that has always *Something* for its Object, this very often has *Nothing*; nothing *real* I mean, however it may have an imaginary Exiſtence in our own Fancies: Which, if they be not kept in good Order, will, and continually do, create a thouſand Spectres and Phantoms, to terrify and torment us. Sometimes, 'tis true, (very often, God knows) there is real Cauſe for our Fears, which

which are often very rational and well-grounded: But it is often otherwiſe too. SERM. IX.

THIS Paſſion of *Fear* then is to be regulated by the ſame Means as that of *Grief*, *viz.* by *contracting*, *ſeparating*, and *tranſferring* our *Thoughts*: And one Method in general to regulate Both, is to employ our Thoughts upon the *Preſent*, and not ſuffer them exorbitantly to rove and ramble, either *backwards* to what is *Paſt*, or *forwards* to what is *Future*. It cannot, I preſume, be imagined that I would exclude a rational *Caution* or *Proviſion* for the *Future*. One great Part of Prudence conſiſts in that. But then it has always for its Object ſomething more or leſs in our own *Power*, not that which it is impoſſible for us to *prevent*.

WITH reference to a *good* or *bad Choice*, *Virtue* or *Vice*; let us likewiſe habituate ourſelves to *cloſe* and *particular* Thinking, and to *turn* our Thoughts from *one* Object to *another*: For Inſtance, from the preſent Pleaſure of *Vice*, to the preſent Vileneſs, Turpitude, and Shame, and the future Pain and Miſery added to it; as alſo to the preſent Pleaſure and future Reward of *Virtue*. Thus, when we are tempted to any *ſenſual*

SERM. IX. Wickedneſs. Among thoſe which are of a quite different Nature, I will mention but *one*. Are we *proud* of what we *do* know? Let us conſider what we do *not* know. And that (if in a *moral* Senſe he *truly* knows *any* thing) will be ſufficient Mortification to the moſt knowing Perſon upon Earth. I give only theſe few Inſtances for a Sample; for it would be endleſs, as well as needleſs, to ſpecify *all*. But there is the ſame Reaſon for the reſt: And the ſame Rules may be be applied to thoſe which *are not*, and indeed (being innumerable) *cannot* be ſo much as here *mention'd*. Yet *one* I will a little more particularly, though very briefly, ſpeak to: Becauſe it is of great Moment, and comes directly under this Rule concerning the *uniting*, *ſeparating*, and *transferring* our *Thoughts*. I mean the Caſe of *Inattention*, *Indevotion*, or *Wandring Thoughts* in *Prayer*; concerning which I would offer theſe ſhort Admonitions.

1*ſt*, BEFORE we addreſs ourſelves to the Throne of Grace, let us turn the Bent of our Minds, from any thing *worldly* about which they were employ'd, to that Divine Exerciſe in which we are now going to be engaged.

engaged. Though this *may* be done *in a Moment, in the Twinkling of an Eye*, yet (reaſonably ſpeaking) the more Time we take for it, the better it is. 2*dly*, As we are always *attentive* to what we *love*, and ſo on the reverſe; we muſt carefully guard againſt *Wearineſs* in our Devotions, and not ſuffer our *uppermoſt* Thought to be wiſhing they were *over*. This is downright Irreligion and Profaneneſs, and is a certain Proof of an Heart eſtranged from God and Goodneſs. I always mean if this be the *habitual* ſettled Temper of our Minds; for great Allowances muſt be made for human Infirmities. If our Prayers be *uneaſy* to *us*, we ſhall certainly be *unattentive* to *them*. The Way to remedy this is, 3*dly*, To conſider that we are more immediately in the *Preſence of God*, and directly ſpeaking to him: That great is the Guilt of *drawing near to him with our Lips, when our Hearts are far from him* *: That we are partly ſuing for Happineſs both here and hereafter, partly engaged in the moſt noble and ſublime Exerciſe of which not only the Human, but the Angelical Nature is capable. SERM. IX.

* Iſaiah xxix. 13.

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THESE Directions I thought proper juſt to mention; and ſhall leave this Subject with an Obſervation upon thoſe *pious* but *melancholy* Chriſtians, who complain that how much ſoever they *ſtrive* and *labour*, they *cannot* pray with their *Thoughts*. To theſe I ſay, 1*ſt*, They *may* pray with their Thoughts, and yet fancy they *do not*: So unaccountable a Diſeaſe is Melancholy. They are prone to judge too hardly and ſeverely of themſelves; and becauſe they do not pray ſo *earneſtly*, and with ſo much *Alacrity*, as they *wiſh*, imagine they do not pray *at all*. But, 2*dly*, Putting it at the *worſt*, and ſuppoſing the Fact to be *true*: Whoſoever ſincerely labours to do his Duty in the greateſt Perfection, and performs the Matter of it as well as he can, is certainly accepted by God, whatever Imperfection he may labour under. Let theſe Perſons therefore continue their *outward* Devotions (as they fancy them to be, though they are really *more*) at the uſual Periods, kneel upon their Knees, ſpeak the Words, and (as it is ordinarily expreſſed) *ſay their Prayers* both in private and in publick; (this they *muſt* do, or elſe *indeed* they neglect their

their Duty) and if, notwithſtanding their utmoſt Endeavours, and Prayers to God, their Thoughts be ſtill abſent, (though they may depend upon it they are not ſo much abſent as they imagine) let them reſt aſſured that they are as much accepted by God, as if they perform'd their Devotions with Fervour and Pleaſure. Let their very Uneaſineſs therefore make them eaſy: For ſo indeed it ought; becauſe it is a ſure Sign that they ſincerely do their Duty as well as they can, wiſh they could do it better, are heartily grieved that they cannot: And no more is required of any Man. This, I ſay, is ſpoken to *pious*, but *melancholy*, Chriſtians; not to the *profane*, the *worldly-minded*, the *careleſs* and *negligent* in their Devotions: Whoſe *Guilt* is great, and whoſe *Condemnation* (if they do not repent and reform) will be heavy and grievous. SERM. IX.

THUS then we may and ought to *manage* our *Thoughts*; call them off from their Ramblings, exert them with Vigour; ſeparate, unite, or transfer them, as Occaſion requires. And in order *to* it we muſt imprint upon our Minds a thorough Senſe of the *Neceſſity of* it. By theſe Means, with the Aſſiſtance of

SERM. IX. of God's Grace, all the Diſeaſes of our Souls will be healed, whether they relate to our Longings after Pleaſure, or to our Averſions from Pain. Or if not quite healed, they will at leaſt be very much abated:

——— ——— *Lenire dolorem*
Poſſis, atque aliquam morbi deponere partem:*

enough abated, to make them conſiſtent with our being tolerably well here, and eternally happy hereafter: Whereas without theſe Means they will be utterly inconſiſtent with Both.

I HAVE not, as a *diſtinct* Rule, mention'd *Prayer to God* for his Grace and Aſſiſtance; becauſe it is *general*, and is a Rule for every thing in Religion, as well as for this. But we ought to be ſo far from neglecting it here, that here eſpecially it is abſolutely neceſſary, and particularly proper. For beſides that (as I have ſhewn) our *Virtue* or *Vice*, *Happineſs* or *Miſery*, proceeds from our *Thoughts*, and therefore we ſhould, above all things, implore the Divine Aſſiſtance in the Regulation of *them:* I ſay, beſides this, it is by *them* that we are immediately related

* HOR. Epiſt. 1, Lib. ii.

lated to God, who is *pure Thought*; and we can be united to him, converſe with him, and enjoy him only in that Part of our Nature which is a *Thinking* Principle. SERM. IX.

CLEANSE, therefore, *the Thoughts of our Hearts*, O God, we beſeech thee: *Make us clean Hearts, and renew a right Spirit within us.*

AND, O *Almighty Lord, who alone canſt order the unruly* Judgments and Imaginations, as well as *Wills and Affections of ſinful Men, grant unto thy People that they may love the Thing which thou commandeſt, and deſire that which thou doſt promiſe: That ſo among the ſundry and manifold Changes of the World, our* HEARTS *may ſurely there be fixed, where true Joys are to be found; through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.*

To whom with the Father, &c.

SERMON

SERMON X.

Of Religious Retirement, and Self-Examination.

PSAL. IV. 4.

Stand in awe, and ſin not: Commune with your own Heart in your Chamber, and be ſtill.

THIS Pſalm was probably compoſed by *David* upon the ſame Occaſion and Subject with that preceding it, *viz.* the *Rebellion* of his Son *Abſalom*, and of thoſe other diſloyal Subjects who adhered to him. *Hear me when I call, O God of my Righteouſneſs: Thou haſt ſet me at liberty when I was in Trouble; have Mercy upon me, and hearken unto my Prayer.** SERM. X.

" As

* Ver. 1.

SERM. X. " As thou haſt often delivered me out of " great and imminent Dangers, ſo deliver " me out of theſe with which I am now " threaten'd and ſurrounded." *O ye Sons of Men,* (ſpeaking to *Abſalom* and his Followers) *how long will ye blaſpheme mine Honour,* [turn my Glory into Shame] *and have ſuch Pleaſure in Vanity, and ſeek after Leaſing? Know this, that the Lord hath choſen to himſelf the Man that is godly* *; i. e. hath ſingled out *Me* his faithful and devout Servant, to be his Anointed, his Vicegerent, by his own immediate Appointment King over his People; and therefore *when I call upon the Lord, he will hear me* †. *Stand in awe, and ſin not: Commune with your own Heart in your Chamber, and be ſtill.* " Look well to " it; ſeriouſly and coolly conſider what you " are doing; ſuffer not yourſelves to be " hurried into Sin and Miſery by popular " Noiſe and Clamour, without Thought " or Reflection; but examine your own " Hearts in Privacy and Retirement; ab- " ſtain from Rebellion againſt God and his " Anointed, and be ſtill:" *i. e.* Either *be calm* and *quiet*, to receive the Admonitions of

* Ver. 2. † Ver. 3.

of right Reaſon and Religion; or *deſiſt from* the *Enterprize*, in which you are engaged; or *both:* For the Word in the Original will very well admit of either. Some Interpreters (the *Septuagint* in particular) render רגזו by *Be ye angry*; as it very properly may be render'd: Which Tranſlation is followed by St. *Paul* himſelf. And then the Senſe is, If you be *uneaſy* and *diſguſted* at my *Perſon*, or any Part of my *Conduct*, yet let not your *Reſentment* carry you *ſo far*, as to involve you in the *Guilt* of taking up Arms againſt the Sovereign whom God by his own immediate Act has ſet over you. If you *deliberately*, and with *awful Reverence*, conſider Things, you will give over ſo wicked and deſperate an Undertaking. SERM. X.

THUS for the *particular* Occaſion and Senſe of the Words, as here ſpoken by the Royal Pſalmiſt. But as St. *Paul* makes a *general* Uſe of them according to one of the Interpretations, laying down this as a ſtanding Precept in Chriſtian Morality, * *Be ye angry, and ſin not*, i. e. let not your Anger lead you into Sin; or be not *ſo far* angry as to *ſin* by it: ſo ſhall I make a general Uſe of

* Epheſ. iv. 26.

SERM. X.

of them according to the other, laying down this practical Propoſition, "That "*private Meditation* is exceeding uſeful, and "even neceſſary; that the *Mind* cannot "be in a good *Frame*, nor the *Soul* in a "good *State*, without it." *Stand in awe, and ſin not; commune with your own Heart in your Chamber, and be ſtill.* In the other Tranſlation it is *upon your Bed*; which indeed is the right Rendring, agreeably to the Letter of the *Hebrew* Original. However, I ſhall in my enſuing Diſcourſe proceed chiefly according to the firſt-mention'd Verſion, as I read the Words in my Text. Not that the other is by any means to be overlooked or neglected. *On your Bed.* It is one proper Exerciſe of Religion to fill up the *Intervals* of *Sleep* with ſerious Thoughts, and devout Meditation. *Have I not remember'd thee in my Bed? and thought upon thee when I was waking?* ſays the ſame * Divine Author in another Place. A truly pious Soul cannot well avoid this: And if we do not frequently at leaſt, as the Occaſions offer, thus employ our Thoughts, it is a ſure Sign that *our Hearts are not right* towards God and

* Pſalm lxiii. 6.

and heavenly Things. This is more particularly to be obſerved of thoſe who lie upon the *Bed of Sickneſs*: Suppoſing them to have their Underſtandings entire, and not to be in *extreme* Pain, or Weakneſs of Body. Thus another holy Writer in the Book of *Pſalms*: *In the Time of my Trouble I ſought the Lord; my Sore ran, and ceaſed not in the Night-Seaſon; my Soul refuſed Comfort. When I am in Heavineſs, I will think upon God; when my Heart is vexed, I will complain. Thou holdeſt mine Eyes waking: I am ſo feeble, that I cannot ſpeak. I have conſidered the Days of old, and the Years of ancient Times. I call to Remembrance my Song; and in the Night I commune with mine own Heart, and ſearch out my Spirit. Will the Lord abſent himſelf for ever? and will he be no more intreated?—And I ſaid it is mine own Infirmity; but I will remember the Years of the Right Hand of the Moſt Higheſt*, &c.* I do not ſay that we ought by theſe Meditations to hinder ourſelves from taking our natural Reſt; nay, we certainly ought *not*. A *little* of this however, whether we are in *Health* or *Sickneſs*, will make us reſt the better,

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* Pſalm lxxvii. 2, 3, 4, &c.

SERM. X. better, if we are *inclined* to Reſt: But if (as the Scripture elegantly expreſſes it) our *Sleep goes from us* *, we ought to muſe and reflect *chiefly* upon Subjects of this Nature. And, as I ſaid, a truly good Chriſtian cannot well avoid it: The Thoughts occur of courſe, and naturally preſent themſelves. 'Tis ſo as to worldly Matters,—*ſub noctem cura recurſat* †: And 'tis the ſame as to the *Care* of *our Souls*, and the Fear and Love of God. The Darkneſs and Silence of the Night ſtrike a religious Awe into well-turn'd Minds, and invite them to divine Meditation. And here Praiſe, as well as Prayer, and other devout Reflection, is very proper. *Let the Saints be joyful with Glory; let them rejoice in their Beds. Let the Praiſes of God be in their Mouths*, &c. ‡ But here in my Text I take the Word *Bed* to imply that of *Chamber* likewiſe; and ſo Expoſitors interpret it: *Cubili*, vel *Cubiculo*. And the latter again is not to be confined to its firſt and ſtricteſt Meaning, but ſignifies *Privacy*, or *Retirement*; being *alone*, or *by one's ſelf*: Whether we meditate in our *Chamber*, or in the *Field*, the Thing is the ſame.

* Dan. vi. 18. † VIRGIL. ‡ Pſalm cxlix. 5.

ſame. In further diſcourſing upon theſe Words I ſhall do theſe *four* Things. SERM. X.

I. FIRST, ſtate what we mean by *Religious Meditation*, and how much is included *in* it.

II. SHEW the manifold *Benefits*, and even abſolute Neceſſity *of* it.

III. POINT out the main *Impediments* which are apt to hinder us *from* it.

IV. LAY down ſome *Rules* or Directions *concerning* it.

I. FIRST then, what we mean by *Religious Meditation*, and how much is included *in* it. To this may very well be *reduced* pious and devout Reflections upon the *Nature* and *Attributes* of God, his infinite Perfections, his glorious Majeſty, Wiſdom, Holineſs, *&c.* as alſo upon his Works, and thoſe of *Creation*, *Redemption*, and *Providence*: Likewiſe upon the Shortneſs and Uncertainty of human Life, the wretched Vanity and Emptineſs of this World, and every thing in it; upon thoſe which are commonly call'd the four *laſt* Things, *Death*, *Judgment*, *Heaven*, and *Hell*. This, I ſay,

SERM. X. is properly reduced to private *Religious Meditation*, is of great Uſe and Benefit, and cannot be neglected by any ſincerely good Chriſtian. But then it is not that Part of it which is *directly intended* in the Words of my Text, *Commune with your own Heart:* Which certainly means *Self-Examination*, Calling ourſelves to account for our paſt Actions, Enquiring into the preſent State of our Souls, carefully conſidering the Condition we are in here with regard to our eternal one hereafter. *Heart* in this Place ſignifies *Conſcience*, as it does in many other Places of Scripture. *David's Heart ſmote him**; i. e. his *Conſcience* accuſed him. And *Eccleſ.* vii. 22. *Thine Heart knoweth that thou thyſelf haſt curſed others.* And 1 *John* iii. 21. *If our Heart condemn us not.* This Exerciſe more or leſs, and very often at leaſt, muſt be attended with Prayer and Praiſes; with reading and meditating upon the holy Scriptures, and other pious and practical Books; with renewing and ſtrengthning our Chriſtian Reſolutions, with enlivening and confirming our Faith and Repentance. For even in this Retirement, in thus

* 1 Sam. xxiv. 5.

thus *communing with our own Hearts*, and converſing with ourſelves, we muſt not converſe with ourſelves *only*; but with *God*, by praying to him and reading his Word; and even with *Men* in ſome meaſure, by reading their uſeful and inſtructive Writings. Thus much may ſuffice for the *Nature* and *Extent* of the Exerciſe here recommended: We are in the *next* Place to ſhew, SERM. X.

II. THE manifold *Benefits*, and even abſolute *Neceſſity* of it. *Conſideration* in general is required of us, as we are rational Creatures: For to what Purpoſe was the *Faculty* of *Thinking* given us, if we do not *employ* it in *actual* Thought? And yet how few are there that employ it as they ſhould do? They will ſay perhaps, They *do think*, and that *continually*: Elſe, how ſhould they go through their ordinary *Buſineſs*, and the Affairs of this Life? So do the *Brutes* go round in a Circle of *ſomething like* Buſineſs: And thoſe we are ſpeaking of have but little more Thought than they; being *carried down* the *Stream* of *Time*, like a *Log* upon a *River*; though with *ſomething* more of

SERM. X. *Thought*, yet without thinking or *reflecting* to any *conſiderable Purpoſe*. But we here mean more abſtract and retired Thinking, ſuch as tends to the perfecting of our rational Nature, and making us more nearly akin to the Angels: And it is a plain Dictate of *Reaſon* itſelf that this is required of us. If then we are obliged to *Conſideration* in *general* as *Men*, we are obliged to *religious* Conſideration as Men and *Chriſtians*. And to a rightly-diſpoſed Mind how great muſt be the Pleaſure, as well as Profit, of withdrawing from the Noiſe and Buſtle of the World, and meditating in private upon the Moral and Divine Subjects I juſt now mentioned under my *Firſt* Head! Though perfect Solitude be by no means convenient or deſireable, yet very often it is *good for Man to be alone*. There is no Converſation more agreeable, as well as inſtructive, than that of one's own Soul: And he can be in no good State, who has an univerſal Acquaintance abroad, and is a Stranger to himſelf at home. This holds true, whether we are in Joy or Grief, in Proſperity or Adverſity: For though Both ſhould be communicated to our Friends, the one for its

its Increaſe, the other for its Diminution; yet Both muſt, and neceſſarily will, depend mainly and chiefly upon ourſelves, and the Regulation and Adjuſtment of our own Thoughts. They may be in ſome meaſure partaken of by others; but they will always reſide in our own Breaſts: And therefore unleſs we frequently retire within ourſelves, we can never truly and thoroughly rejoice in Proſperity, or be comforted in Adverſity. Eſpecially as to the laſt-mention'd: *In the Day of Adverſity conſider*, as the Royal Preacher ſpeaks *. To divert Melancholy in Company is indeed very proper, ſo far as it will go; but that *only* will never do the Buſineſs. If that be *all*, we ſhall ſtill be miſerable: For when we are alone, as we muſt be ſometimes, whether we will or no, our Thoughts, unleſs regulated by religious Meditation, will not fail to diſquiet and torment us. Be a Man's outward Condition what it will, he is certainly unhappy, if he be never well and eaſy but when he is *in Company*, as it is called; that is, in the Converſation of Others: He is a wretched forlorn Creature, if he cannot, very

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* Eccleſ. vii. 14.

SERM. X. often at leaſt, be *good Company* to *Himſelf.*

PARTICULARLY in Times of *publick Calamity*, either as to *Church* or *State*, or *both*, but eſpecially the *firſt*, the beſt and wiſeſt of Men are apt indeed to be greatly concern'd, to be *careful about many things*, and ſo to be *inquiſitive* and *deſirous to hear* how *Affairs go*, (as the Phraſe is) and are *like* to go: Nor is the Thing itſelf blameable, it being natural, but the Exceſs of it only. Yet after all it is much better *coolly*, and *ſeriouſly*, and *piouſly* to *think* and *pray* at home, than *anxiouſly* and *ſolicitouſly* to *enquire* abroad; much better to conſider in our Privacy and Receſs, that *The Lord is King, be the People never ſo impatient; he ſitteth between the Cherubim, be the Earth never ſo unquiet* *. We muſt not indeed, in ſuch a Caſe, abandon ourſelves to *Solitude*, much leſs to a ſullen *Deſpondency*, ſo as to neglect our Duty in the moſt active Part of Life. Very far from it: We muſt do our utmoſt to prevent the Evils and Miſchiefs with which we are threaten'd. But this being taken care of, we ſhould with humble

* Pſalm xcix. 1.

ble Reſignation leave the Event to God, awfully revere all the Steps of his Providence; obſerve, and ſubmit; be ſilent, and adore. Then, let the worſt happen, will appear the Truth of what is elſewhere ſaid by the Pſalmiſt: *Unto the Upright there ariſeth Light in the Darkneſs* *: And, *In the Multitude of the Thoughts* [or Sorrows] *which I had in my Heart, thy Comforts have refreſhed my Soul* †. SERM. X.

BUT becauſe *Self-Examination* is the direct and immediate Subject of the Text I am now upon, I ſhall inſiſt chiefly upon *that*. *I thought on my Ways, and turned my Feet unto thy Teſtimonies* ‡. From which Words is deduced this plain Propoſition: That *Conſideration* or *Reflection* upon our *Actions* is of ſingular Uſe and Benefit to us in the whole Conduct of our Lives; as on the other Side, to be in an *unthinking* State, and never, or but ſeldom, to reflect upon what we are doing, or whither we are going, is to the laſt Degree dangerous and pernicious. I have joined together thoſe who have *no* Conſideration in them, and thoſe who have but *very little*, becauſe the ſame Advice

* Pſalm cxii. 4. † Pſ. xciv. 19. ‡ Pſ. cxix. 59.

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Advice is applicable to them *both*; it being as dangerous to think ſo *ſeldom* upon our Actions, and upon our Condition, as it is not to do it *at all*: Since the *firſt* of theſe has no good Effect, but ſuffers us to go on in our evil Ways to everlaſting Deſtruction; and that is as bad as can be ſaid of the *other*.

IT will be readily granted, that a Man cannot be truly *religious*, unleſs he habitually abſtains from Evil, and does Good as he has Power and Opportunity. And how can he do this, who never *examines* or *enquires* into his *Actions*; and never troubles himſelf to conſider, whether that which he chuſes and refuſes, gives over or perſiſts in, be good or evil? How ſhould that Traveller arrive at his Journey's End, who, when there is Variety of Ways before him, never concerns himſelf to enquire whether he be in the right or wrong? Though indeed more may be ſaid for *him*, than for the Perſon of whom we are now ſpeaking. The *Traveller* may happen *accidentally* to hit upon the right: But that cannot be ſaid in the Caſe before us. There is no ſuch Thing as being *religious by chance*, or without Thought and

and Conſideration: Becauſe Religion is a rational Thing, a *reaſonable Service* *, as both Scripture and Reaſon itſelf aſſure us. SERM. X.

BUT to be a little more particular. In *temporal Concerns*, in the Buſineſs of *this* Life, is it poſſible for a Man to thrive and proſper, who ſeldom or never looks into his Accounts, or keeps none at all? Every body knows what is like to be the Conſequence; his Fortunes muſt be broken, and Ruin be his Portion. And as it is in *Temporals*, juſt ſo it is in *Spirituals*: Sins againſt God are ſo many *Debts* contracted. *Forgive us our Treſpaſſes*, and *forgive us our Debts*, are in Scripture Expreſſions equivalent. And in Spirituals as well as Temporals our *Debts* muſt neceſſarily double and treble upon us, till we are bankrupt and undone, if we do not keep an Account of them, frequently review them, and take due Care for the Diſcharge of them. To diſcharge our Debts to God is to do our Duty, repent of our Sins, effectually reform them, and become *capable Objects* of the *Ranſom* which our Bleſſed *Redeemer* has paid for us. And in *this* Life only can theſe

* Rom. xii. 1.

SERM. X. theſe Obligations be diſcharged. If, before they are ſo, the Arreſt of Death overtake us, we are without Redemption *caſt into Priſon*, and *ſhall not come out thence till we have paid the uttermoſt Farthing*: i. e. not at all; for the uttermoſt Farthing can never be paid. *O conſider this, ye that forget God**, becauſe you *forget yourſelves*, your own Ways and Actions, your own State and Condition; leſt *the Adverſary deliver* you *to the Judge, and the Judge to the Officer, and you be caſt into Priſon* †.

BESIDES, It is our great Unhappineſs in this our lapſed and degenerate State, that we cannot, without a great deal of Labour and Difficulty, diſcern our true and real Intereſt, at leaſt diſcern it ſo clearly and diſtinctly as it were to be wiſhed we did. We are born with original Corruptions rooted in our Nature; and theſe Bodies of Fleſh, with which we are encompaſſed, together with that Variety of Objects which ſtrike upon them, repreſenting falſe and imaginary Happineſs to our View, have a very great Influence upon our Souls, putting a falſe Biaſs upon them, and inclining them to Evil

* Pſalm l. 22. † Matth. v. 25, 26.

Evil rather than Good. To which it muſt be added, that our grand *Adverſary the Devil* * is never wanting in his Endeavours to improve all Opportunities againſt us; to blind our Eyes, to darken our Underſtandings, to keep us from judging rightly, and chuſing wiſely. Our Condition being ſuch, it neceſſarily follows, that unleſs we be very careful and cautious, we ſhall *naturally*, and *of courſe*, run into Error, Vice, and Miſery: Conſequently, without *Conſideration*, and *taking good heed to our Ways*, 'tis impoſſible we ſhould become *religious*. Our Nature, I ſay, being thus corrupt, it is abſolutely neceſſary that we *look well to it*, keep a vigilant Eye over it, correct its Errors, and recall it from its Deviations. Without this all will be wrong. As well may we expect that a Watch, or a Clock, ſhould go regularly and exactly, without being duly wound up, taken to pieces at proper Times, cleanſed and rectified. Without this Care and Regulation, the Wheels and Springs of thoſe Machines do not more naturally gather Ruſt, run at random, or ſtand ſtill, than do the Powers and Faculties of the Mind:

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* 1 Pet. v. 8.

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Mind: Which, like the Limbs, and other Parts of the Body, gain Strength and Vigour by Exerciſe and Motion. *Meditation* and *Prayer* are to our Minds and Religion, what Gales of Wind are to the Ocean and Navigation. They are to Spiritual Life in the Soul, what the Contraction and Dilatation of the Heart, and the Pulſes in the Veins, are to the Circulation of the Blood and Animal Life in the Body. Without theſe all is Stagnation, and a dead Calm; and ſpiritual Death muſt neceſſarily enſue. I juſt mention theſe *plain Similitudes* and *Alluſions*, becauſe I take them to be of great Uſe for the *Illuſtration* of theſe Matters, and *almoſt* equivalent to *Arguments*. Though *Soul* and *Body* are Beings of a very different, nay contrary Nature; yet in ſome certain Reſpects they agree and *ſymbolize*, or at leaſt in our Way of apprehending ſeem to do ſo. There is ſpiritual *Food* for the *Soul*, as there is corporeal for the *Body*. The *one* has its *Diſeaſes*, and *Medicines* for them, as well as the *other*: And *Exerciſe* and *Motion* tend to the *Health* and *Well-being* of *both*.

HAVING

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HAVING thus considered the *Nature* and *Extent* of Religious Meditation, as also the *Usefulness*, and even *Necessity* of it; I proceed now, in the *Third* Place,

III. To point out the main *Impediments* which are apt to hinder us *from* it. These are intimated to us in those Words of our Blessed Saviour, *Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your Hearts be over-charged with Surfeiting and Drunkenness, and the Cares of this Life; and so that Day come upon you unawares* *. By which we are admonished, that the chief Hindrances of religious Consideration are,

1*st*, THE *Love of the World*, both of the Wealth and Glory of it.

2*dly*, INTEMPERANCE in Eating and Drinking. To which we may well add,

3*dly*, OVER-MUCH *Company-keeping*, and an inordinate Love of *Conversation*.

FOR the *first* of these: The *covetous* Man's restless Cares for the Things of this Life must needs justle all religious Thoughts out of his Mind. How should he examine his Actions, or enquire into his spiritual Condition,

* Luke xxi. 34.

SERM. X. dition, who is entirely taken up with worldly Schemes and Contrivances? whoſe Invention is always upon the Rack, how to *get* or *ſave* ſuch a Sum of Money, how to *procure* an Eſtate which he has *not*, or to *increaſe* that which he *has?* whoſe Affections are ſo glew'd to Earth, that he never bends them any other way, or endeavours to fix them upon any other Object? He is ſo immerſed in ſecular Affairs, in what the *World* calls *Buſineſs*, that he has no Time for *religious Retirement*, and private Converſation with himſelf. As little has the *aſpiring* and *ambitious* Perſon; who is continually hunting after Preferments, Honours, Titles, and Dignities. What Room has *this* Man left for ſpiritual Reflection? whoſe Life is all Noiſe and Hurry? who is always courting, or being courted; ſoliciting the Favour and Intereſt of the Great; forming Schemes of his own, or unravelling thoſe of others? This then is one great Hindrance intimated by our Saviour, being to deeply involved in *the Cares of this Life.*

2*dly*, ANOTHER is *Intemperance* in Eating and Drinking. *Take heed leſt your Heart be over-charged with Surfeiting and Drunkenneſs,*

neſs, and ſo that Day come upon you una-wares. Our being ſo over-charged will be in danger of occaſioning *that Day's coming upon us unawares*; i. e. will hinder us from religious Conſideration. How great an Enemy exceſſive Drinking is to cool Thought and Reflection, nobody wants to be informed. Thoſe who are given to it are generally unfit for *any* Buſineſs. Their Brains are perpetually clouded and ſtupified, heated and over-chafed: And how can *Conſideration* be expected from ſuch a one as this? one who is ſcarce able to *think at all*, much leſs to *conſider*, which implies a Train of Thought. Leaſt of all can it be expected that he ſhould *conſider his Ways* *, the Courſe of his Life and Actions, and the State of his Soul; theſe being, of all, the moſt unpleaſant Conſiderations to him, and the moſt contrary to one of his Temper and Way of Living. Beſides; as ſuch a Perſon is ſeldom or never in *Humour*, ſo he is ſeldom in *Health*, to go through this Taſk as he ſhould do: The bodily Diſtempers which attend Intemperance being many and grievous. Or if, by the Help of a ſtrong

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* Prov. vi. 6.

SERM. X. Conſtitution, he ſhould happen to avoid theſe Inconveniences, which is not very likely; yet he is continually *engaged*, and *taken up with Company*.

3*dly*, THIS Hindrance I mentioned as diſtinct from the *other*: And ſo it very well may be. For though *Intemperance* generally ſuppoſes much *Company-keeping*, yet it is not ſo on the *Reverſe*; there being many too much in Love with *Converſation*, yet not guilty of *Intemperance* commonly ſo called, though (for the moſt part) they are not far from it neither. Now though no reaſonable Perſon would condemn the Uſe of Converſation in the main, it being one of the beſt and moſt rational Enjoyments, that Man, who was deſign'd for Society, is capable of; yet the immoderate Uſe of this, as of other good Things, is certainly very pernicious and deſtructive. It will be ſaid perhaps, that though a Man be never ſo much in Love with Converſation, yet he cannot always be actually engaged in it, but muſt (whether he will or no) have *ſome* Time to himſelf. True it is, he muſt have *ſome*, but he may not have *enough*: And beſides, ſuch a one, while he is *out* of Company,

pany, will be ever *longing* and *hankering af-* SERM.
ter it: His Life will be a Burden to him, X.
and his Time lie like a dead Weight upon his Hands. And for that Reaſon he will never employ it in any religious Exerciſe: Since his Time is *uneaſy* to him, he will not *employ* it, but *divert* it. 'Tis impoſſible he ſhould ſeriouſly *conſider*, becauſe the whole Bent of his Soul ſtands another Way: And he that *deſires* to be always *in* Company, will never be *thoughtful* and *contemplative*, even when he is *out* of it.

IT muſt be here obſerved, that as the *Love of the World*, *Intemperance*, and the like, are apt to hinder us from *religious Meditation*, ſo *religious Meditation* is apt to hinder us from *them*; there being the ſame Reaſon of Contraries, and Contraries naturally tending to deſtroy one another.

IV. I COME now, in the *Fourth* and *Laſt* Place, to lay down ſome *Rules* and *Directions* concerning it; I mean as to the *Method* and *Management* of it. Theſe having no Difficulty, it will be ſufficient to mention them promiſcuouſly, and without any formal Diſtribution of Matter into diſtinct

SERM. X. Particulars. It is not equally required of *All* to employ the *ſame* Portion of Time in this Exerciſe; becauſe *All* have not Leiſure nor Capacities alike. But then let it be remember'd on the other hand, that though All are not *Scholars*, *Philoſophers*, or *Divines*, yet All who are not only *Men* but *Chriſtians* ought *ſeriouſly to conſider* that they are *both*, and *as ſuch* to employ *ſome* Part of their Time in private religious Meditation: And that not only now and then, by *Fits* and *Starts*, when it happens to come into their Heads, and they have nothing elſe to do; but *conſtantly*, *habitually*, in a *regular*, *orderly* Method of Thinking. *Some* of this ſhould be *every Morning*, before they enter upon the Buſineſs of their ordinary Callings: *More* of it *every Evening*; when they ſhould calmly reflect upon the Actions of the Day paſt, repenting of the *bad*, and giving God the Glory of the *good*. *Prayer* indeed, both *Morning* and *Evening*, muſt not fail to accompany theſe Meditations: And thoſe who have much Leiſure ſhould be more frequent in theſe Exerciſes; but then let it be conſider'd, that (as there are Extremes in all things) ſome pious Perſons

may

may ſpend too much Time in them, ſo as to prejudice their Health, and incline them to Moping and Melancholy. Theſe ſhould conſider, that nothing is agreeable to *true Religion*, which is contrary to *good Senſe* and *right Reaſon*. Thus *every Day*.—But as there are *ſome Days*, Times, and Seaſons more eſpecially proper for this Exerciſe, it will be fit juſt to mention them. Firſt then, the *Lord's Day* more particularly. Thoſe Parts of it which are not appropriated to the publick Worſhip and Service of God would be much better ſpent in *communing with their own Hearts in their Chambers*, than in going abroad, or in idle unedifying Tattle, either abroad or at home. Next, Times of *Calamity* and *Adverſity*, whether publick or private, or both; the holy Seaſon of *Lent*; any Times ſet apart for *Humiliation* and *Repentance*, or preparing for the Reception of the *bleſſed Sacrament*. SERM. X.

To conclude with a brief Exhortation: Let us all apply what has been ſaid to ourſelves, as our ſeveral Circumſtances require. *Let us conſider, and ſhew ourſelves Men*, as the Prophet * ſpeaks; *i. e.* let us act like *rational*

* Iſaiah xlvi. 8.

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tional Creatures, not go on in our Courſes without any Reflection upon them, like the Brute Beaſts *which have no Underſtanding*.* For though we may *live* like *Beaſts*, we cannot *die* ſo. There is an After-Reckoning, and a ſtrict Account of our Lives and Actions will be demanded by that jealous God who *will by no means clear the Guilty*†. Let us therefore *now in this our Day conſider the Things which belong to our Peace, before they are for ever hid from our Eyes*‡; and always remember, that if we will not ſuffer our *Thoughts* to be our *Monitors* in *this* World, they will for ever be our *Tormentors* in the World *to come*.

Now to God the Father, &c.

* Pſalm. xxxii. 9. † Exod. xxxiv. 7.
‡ Luke xix. 42.

SERMON

SERMON XI.

The Glory of God in his Works of Creation and Providence: And the Uſe we ought to make of both.

The *Firſt* Sermon on this Subject.

PSAL. XCII. 5, 6.

O Lord, how great are thy Works! and thy Thoughts are very deep. A brutiſh Man knoweth not, neither doth a Fool conſider this.

TO contemplate the wonderful Works of God, and to praiſe and adore him in the Contemplation of them, is the nobleſt Employment of a created

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ated rational Being, and moſt agreeable to its Nature *as* rational. *One* Order or Syſtem *only* of his Works, *viz.* the Heavens, and the heavenly Bodies, the Sun, Moon, and Stars, appeared ſo conſiderable to the Heathen Philoſopher *Anaxagoras*, that he declared Man was *born* to contemplate and admire them. And yet how many other Orders, or Syſtems, of Creatures are there, which no leſs claim our Admiration! The whole Creation abounds with amazing Curioſities: The meaneſt Herb or Flower, the meaneſt Fly or other Inſect, affords Matter of its Maker's Praiſe, no leſs than the Sun in its Brightneſs, or the Moon and the Stars in their Courſes. But beſides his Wonders of *Creation*, his Wonders of *Providence* are Subjects moſt worthy of our devout Meditation. The *Pſalmiſt* in my Text ſpeaks of the laſt-mentioned, as well as of the other; nay, in the Courſe of the Pſalm he inſiſts *chiefly* upon *them*: After the Words of my Text to the End he inſiſts upon them *only*; ſhewing the miſerable State of the Wicked, though at preſent never ſo proſperous; and the bleſſed Condition, and final Reward, of God's faithful and obedient

dient Servants. *When the Wicked ſpring as the Graſs, and when all the Workers of Iniquity do flouriſh, it is that they ſhall be deſtroyed for ever*, &c. *But mine Horn ſhalt thou exalt*, &c. *The Righteous ſhall flouriſh like a Palm-tree*, &c. *To ſhew that the Lord is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no Unrighteouſneſs in him.* However, he begins with the Glories of God diſplay'd in the Creation: *For thou, Lord, haſt made me glad through thy Work; I will triumph in the Works of thy Hands.* In my Text itſelf, *Creation* ſeems to be chiefly meant in theſe Words, *O Lord, how great are thy Works!* And *Providence* in theſe, *Thy Thoughts are very deep.* I ſay *chiefly*; for we muſt not make too great a Difference or Diſtinction between them: His *Works are great*, as well as his *Thoughts deep*, in *Providence*; and his *Thoughts deep*, as well as his *Works great*, in *Creation*. And due Reflection upon Both theſe, the *Pſalmiſt* aſſures us, (and every *Creature* truly *rational*, much more every *Chriſtian* truly *devout*, muſt ſubſcribe to the Truth of it) is *pleaſant* and *delightful*, as well as *juſt* and *reaſonable*, *beneficial* and *profitable*. *It is a good thing to give Thanks unto the*

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I. FIRST, I ſhall conſider, That the *Works of God*, both in *Creation* and *Providence*, are *great* and *wonderful*, and *eaſily proved* to be ſo. *O Lord, how great are thy Works!*

II. SECONDLY, That, though very much, enough for the Purpoſes of Religion, may be eaſily diſcern'd and proved of them,

* Ver. 1, 2, 3, 4.

them, yet both his *Works* of *Creation*, and the *Diſpenſations* of his *Providence*, are *beyond our Depth*, beyond our Reach and Comprehenſion. *Thy Thoughts are very deep.* SERM. XI.

III. THIRDLY, That however *eaſy* it may be, and actually is, to *prove* theſe Things, even this ſuppoſes that *ſome Degree* of *Thought* and *Reflection* is neceſſarily required in order to it.

IV. FOURTHLY, That very many, in all Appearance, *do not employ* even *ſo much* Thought and Reflection upon theſe great and uſeful, theſe noble and delightful Subjects.

V. FIFTHLY, That thoſe who do *not* are *ſtupid*, *fooliſh*, and *wicked*. Theſe three laſt from that Clauſe of the Text, *A brutiſh Man knoweth not, neither doth a Fool conſider this.*

VI. SIXTHLY, and *Laſtly*, I ſhall make ſome farther *Improvements* of the foregoing Conſiderations.

I. FIRST then, The *Works of God*, both in *Creation* and *Providence*, are *great* and *wonderful*, and *eaſily proved* to be ſo. It cannot

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not be ſuppoſed that it is my Purpoſe here to enter into a Detail of thoſe not only copious, but immenſe, inexhauſtible Subjects, *Creation* and *Providence*. Very many large and uſeful Treatiſes have been publiſh'd upon *both*; and none better than by Writers of our own Nation, and to them I refer. My Deſign is only to lay together a few Thoughts, moſt of which have not, at leaſt as I know of, been much taken notice of by others; and the Uſe I propoſe to make of them will appear through the whole Tenor of my Diſcourſe. That not only *the Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament ſheweth his Handy-work*,* but that every thing we ſee, or perceive by our other Senſes, does the ſame, is ſo plain and obvious, that, did not Men wilfully, or at leaſt careleſsly, ſhut their Eyes, they could not want to be reminded of ſo evident a Truth. Their *Eyes*, I mean of their *Minds* and *Underſtandings*: For thoſe of their *Bodies* they do not ſhut; with them they do, and muſt, perceive theſe outward Objects. But then there is no *Reaſoning* in that, though there is *Perception*. Our *outward*

* Pſalm xix. 1.

ward Eyes indeed ſee the Works of God, (and ſo do the Eyes of an *Eagle* or an *Elephant*) but not *as* the Works of God: They make no Obſervation or Reflection; the Mind only can do that. But then to do that is ſo exceeding *eaſy*, that nothing but the moſt inexcuſable Negligence can hinder us from doing it. What makes the Wonders of *Creation* ſo little taken notice of and obſerv'd, even ſo little as to ſeem no Wonders, nay nothing conſiderable at all, is their being ſo *common* and *familiar* to us, our being ſo *uſed* and *accuſtomed* to them: The extreme *Folly*, and even *Brutality* of which ſhall be conſider'd in its proper Place. The *Fact* is now the only Point before us. *Tully*, in his Dialogue *de Naturâ Deorum*, judiciouſly and acutely obſerves, (and I ſhall add ſomething to improve and illuſtrate the Obſervation) that "were a Number of Men born and bred in the Caverns of the Earth, aſſiſted only by artificial Lights, they would there indeed ſee many things which would excite their Curioſity; but as they would diſcern little or nothing of Beauty, Order, and Regularity, theſe Thoughts would paſs off with little or no Reflection. But were they SERM. XI.

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they to be brought out from their ſubterraneous Dwelling to the Surface of the Globe, how would they, the firſt Moment, ſtand amazed at the Sun ſhining in the Firmament, the glorious Light diffuſed all round them, the delightful Variety of Mountains, Valleys, Woods, Rivers, the innumerable Beauties of Herbs, Flowers, Trees, Birds, Beaſts, and infinite other Objects! The Sun withdrawing, and the Moon and Stars appearing, would furniſh them with a new Scene of Surprize and Aſtoniſhment. But when they ſhould have lived long enough to obſerve the Viciſſitudes of Day and Night, the Seaſons of the Year, the Riſing, and Setting, and regular Motions of the Sun, Moon, and Stars, the orderly Succeſſion of Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter, the alternate Death and Reſurrection of Seeds and Vegetables, *&c.* they could not avoid crying out that ſurely this muſt be the Effect of the moſt exquiſite Art and Contrivance, the Work of ſome Being (whereſoever, or whatſoever, he might be) inconceivably wiſe, powerful, and good." Thus would *they* reaſon; and thus would *all Men* reaſon, were not theſe Things ſo common, and were

were we not from our Cradles ſo familiariſed and accuſtomed to them. But becauſe we *are* all ſo accuſtomed *to* them, before we are capable of making any Reflection *upon* them, therefore Multitudes, through the whole Courſe of their Lives, never make any Reflection upon them at all. An Infatuation, which did we not ſee, we could not believe poſſible. But I am preventing myſelf, and muſt forbear. There has been much Diſpute and Speculation about the ſeeming Sagacity and Cunning of ſome Beaſts and Birds, and other Brute Creatures. Upon all which I only ſay in the general, They may have ſomething *analogous* to Reaſon, or, if you pleaſe, (for *Inſtinct* is to me at leaſt a dark Word) ſome low Degree of Reaſon itſelf. I ſee no Danger of the ill Conſequence which ſome apprehend; ſince 'tis plain they have not Reaſon enough to be accountable for their Actions, as we have to be accountable for ours. Upon this Suppoſition, admirable is the Wiſdom of the *Creator* in giving them *juſt ſuch* a *Proportion* of Intellect, as is fit to ſerve *their own* Purpoſes according to the Degree of their Species; and *ours*, in the Uſe we have to

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SERM. XI. to make of them; *juſt ſo much*, and *no more*. For had they as much of it as we, 'tis plain they would not be ſo ſubſervient to *us* as they are, nor could we govern *them* as we do; that common Saying, *Did the Horſe know his own Strength*, &c. being a very true one, and perhaps a wiſer than it is commonly imagined. But if (as Others think) they have no Reaſon, nor Senſe neither, but are mere Pieces of *Mechaniſm*, though infinitely more curious and delicate than the Art of Man is capable of forming, (and if *Man* can do ſo many ſurprizing Things in Mechaniſm as we daily ſee, I cannot imagine why we may not ſuppoſe *God* to do much more; and as for the Signs of Pain and Pleaſure, and even of *ſome* Reaſon which Brutes ſhew, this may be conceived without their having thoſe Things of which theſe *ſeem* to be the Signs, ſince this only makes God's Machine more exquiſite and delicate than Man's: I ſay, upon *this* Suppoſition) the great God in *Creation* and *Providence* ſhines forth yet more illuſtrious. For then every Bird's-Neſt, Honey-Comb, and Spider's Web is an *Act* of *his* Wiſdom and Power; thoſe Creatures being merely Inſtru-

Inſtruments in his Hand. And indeed how can we conceive it to be otherwiſe, as to the *lower* Species of Animals at leaſt? Can ſuch ſilly Inſects as the *Bees* (to mention no more, for the Inſtances are innumerable) can ſuch light, inconſiderable Inſects, which yet are one of the greateſt Curioſities, perhaps *the* greateſt in all Nature, be ſuppoſed by *their own* Skill and Sagacity to perform ſuch aſtoniſhing Things in the extracting of Honey and Wax from Flowers and other Vegetables, and working them up into that Conſiſtency which we ſee and admire, together with the Geometrical Texture of their Combs, which all the Art of Man is not able to equal or imitate? The Thing is manifeſtly incredible, inconceivable, impoſſible. 'Tis God therefore who operates in theſe little Animals; either *immediately*, or, which I rather think, *mediately*; and even that by the Intervention of ſomething which is entirely his own Artifice. And theſe his *ordinary Works*, if Men had but the Grace and Senſe to conſider them as they ſhould do, would appear to be as good Proofs *of a God*, as *Miracles* are of a *Revelation* from him.

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To paſs from *Creation* to *Providence*, or rather from *Creation* and *Providence* in conjunction, to *Providence* ſingly conſidered, and as more commonly and vulgarly ſo called. Did not God continually interpoſe in the Affairs, Events, and what we uſually, though as to *him* improperly, call *Accidents* of the World; it is not conceivable that Things ſhould be in the State we know they are, and actually find them to be. There are ſome Events which have ſuch plain legible Characters and Signatures of *Divine Providence* written and ſtamp'd upon them, that he muſt be blind who does not ſee them, and read them. For inſtance; when Crimes are *paid in Kind*, Men ſuffering the *very ſame* Puniſhment, or ill Uſage, which they unjuſtly, or cruelly, inflicted upon others: As in the Caſe of *Adonibezek*, recorded in the firſt Chapter of *Judges*. All Hiſtory, both ancient and modern, abounds with Examples of the ſame Nature: And he muſt be little acquainted *with* the World, or a very idle Spectator *of* it, who has not obſerved ſomething of this in the Courſe of his own Experience. In ſuch Caſes, *all Men that ſee it*

it (as the *Pſalmiſt* * ſpeaks) ſhall ſay, and, unleſs bereft of their Reaſon, *muſt* ſay, *This hath God done: For they ſhall perceive that it is* HIS *Work.* SERM. XI.

HAVING thus conſider'd the *Firſt* Point, That the *Works of God*, both in *Creation* and *Providence*, are great and wonderful, and eaſily proved to be ſo; I proceed now to the *Second*, which is *this:*

II. THAT though very much, enough for the Purpoſes of Religion, may be eaſily diſcerned and proved of them; yet both his *Works* of *Creation*, and the *Diſpenſations* of his *Providence*, are *beyond our Depth*, beyond our Reach and Comprehenſion. *O Lord, how great are thy Works! Thy Thoughts are very deep.* Here is ſomething *ſuppoſed*, and ſomething *aſſerted.* The *Suppoſition* is *this:* That we perceive and know *enough* of God's Works, both in *Creation* and *Providence*, to ſerve the Purpoſes of *Religion.* This appears from what has been diſcourſed under the foregoing Head. Not only the *Being* of God, but *ſome* of his *Attributes*, as his Power and Wiſdom, are directly and

* Pſalm lxiv. 9.

SERM. XI. immediately proved by his Works of *Creation*. And his *Providence* in the Affairs and Government of the World is plainly evidenced by Matters of Fact, obvious to every rational and conſidering Perſon. The *Aſſertion*, conſiſting of *two* Parts, is *this*: That we cannot go to the Bottom of any thing in the *Works* of *Creation*, nor account for many Difficulties and Obſcurities in the *Diſpenſations* of *Providence*. As to the *former*, all Nature is full of Myſteries. The *internal* Eſſence and Conſtitution of Things is utterly unknown to us. Not to mention many other Inſtances which might be mentioned; it has been often and very well obſerved, that the *Coheſion* of *Matter*, or the Manner how the Parts of it ſtick together, is a Problem not yet ſolved, and never like to be: The infinite *Diviſibility* of *Quantity*, whether affirm'd or denied, labours with ſuch inſuperable Difficulties, that there is Demonſtration on both Sides; as to *Us*, and *our* narrow Capacities, I mean: For 'tis impoſſible both Sides ſhould be true.

THOUGH the *Works* of God in *Creation* therefore are viſible and plain Proofs of * *his eternal*

* Rom. i. 20.

eternal Power and Godhead, ſo that they are *without Excuſe*, who ſee not his *eternal Power and Godhead* in them; yet even *here* his *Thoughts are very deep*: His *Thoughts*, as *Architect* or *Artificer*, are beyond our Depth: His exquiſite Skill and Contrivance indeed is in a great meaſure diſcern'd by us; but the *inward* Springs, and Wheels, and curious Texture of the wonderful Machine are quite hidden and concealed from us. As to the other Part, relating to the Intricacies and Obſcurities of *Providence*; this likewiſe is plain Fact: It is Matter of humble Adoration to *Some*, of profane Cavil and Objection to *Others*; but is granted and acknowledged by *All*. And whether he who cavils, or he who adores, makes the beſt Uſe of his Reaſon in this Caſe, let Reaſon itſelf judge. Is it any thing ſtrange, that *God's* Thoughts ſhould be above *our* Thoughts? that his *Judgments* ſhould to us be *unſearchable*, and his *Ways paſt finding out* *? Is there not all the Reaſon in the World that it *ſhould* be ſo? Nay, is it not in Reaſon and Nature *impoſſible* that it ſhould be *otherwiſe*? Can *Finite* comprehend *Infinite*?

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* Rom. xi. 33.

SERM. XI. *nite?* Is it not a Contradiction? *Canſt thou by ſearching find out God? Canſt thou find out the Almighty to Perfection* *? Notwithſtanding theſe Obſcurities, we may by our Reaſon, if we will make a right Uſe of it, reſt ſatisfied that in theſe Caſes all is as it ſhould be; ſince we can demonſtrate from the perfect Nature of God, that he is infinitely juſt, as well as wiſe and powerful; that though *his Judgments are a great Deep*, yet his *Juſtice ſtandeth like the ſtrong Mountains* †; and though *Clouds and Darkneſs are round about him, yet Righteouſneſs and Equity are the Habitation of his Seat* ‡. *Thy Way is in the Sea, and thy Paths in the great Waters, and thy Footſteps are not known*, ſays the *Pſalmiſt* ‖; and yet he adds in the next Words, *Thou leddeſt thy People like Sheep by the Hand of Moſes and Aaron* §. In this *laſt* his *Providence*, and even *miraculous* Interpoſition by *Signs* and *Wonders*, was plain and viſible to every body. And this Mixture of Shade and Light will to all impartial Conſiderers appear the moſt rational Thing in Nature. As at our *Saviour*'s laſt Coming

* Job xi. 7. † Pſalm xxxvi. 6. ‡ Pſ. xcvii. 2.
‖ Pſalm lxxvii. 19. § Ver. 20.

Coming to Judgment we imagine him to come (as the *Scriptures* aſſure us he actually *will)* in Glory and Luſtre, ſo we imagine that Glory and Luſtre to be in part obſcur'd by Clouds and thick Darkneſs; which two joined together give us the ſtrongeſt Images of his awful Divine Majeſty. Thus it is *now* with regard to his *Providence*, and his *Dealings with the Children of Men.* We have *Light* enough to make us *ſee* and *underſtand*, and both *Light* and *Darkneſs* enough to make us *wonder* and *adore.* Though our ſhort-ſighted *Reaſon* cannot ſee from End to End through the perplexed Chain of Cauſes and Effects, yet his *infinite Knowledge* can: And what is there ſtrange or extraordinary, abſurd or unreaſonable, in all this? SERM. XI.

III. I PROCEED now to my *Third* Obſervation from the Text, That however *eaſy* it may be, and really is, to *prove* theſe Things of which we have been diſcourſing, even *this* ſuppoſes that *ſome Degree* of *Thought* and *Reflection* is neceſſarily required in order to it. From the outward Appearances and Facts we have been conſidering,

SERM. XI. 'tis very *eaſy* to prove *Creation* and *Providence*, the infinite Power, Wiſdom, and Goodneſs of God: But to *prove* any thing, though never ſo *eaſy* to be proved, requires *ſome* Thought and Reflection, *ſome* Exerciſe of our Reaſon and Underſtanding. The *Brutes* (as I obſerved under my *firſt* Head) *ſee* the Works of God, as well as *Men*: But *rational* Creatures only can ſee them *as* the Works of God; and even *they* cannot do ſo, unleſs they reflect *upon* them, and argue *from* them: Which if they do not, they have juſt the ſame Perception of them as the *Brutes* have, and no other. And yet how many ſuch *human Brutes* are there to be met with in the World! How many do not beſtow ſo much as a tranſient Thought upon theſe great and noble, theſe pleaſant and delightful, theſe moſt uſeful and important Subjects! Which was the *Fourth* Thing I propoſed to ſpeak to.

IV. How *many* are there that do *not*, did I ſay? How *few* are there that *do*! How few, at leaſt, who conſider theſe Things duly and thoroughly, as they deſerve and ought to be conſidered! The Generality even

even of *Chriſtians*, 'tis plain enough, take little or no notice of them. *They regard not the Works of the Lord, neither the Operation of his Hands* *, as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks. Thoſe who live in great *Towns* and *Cities ſee*, comparatively, but little of Nature; though even to them the Sun, Moon, and Stars, one would think, were there nothing elſe, as there is a great deal, might be ſufficient Matter of their curious and devout Speculation. But they are ſo taken up (much more than they ought to be) with *worldly Cares* and *Buſineſs*, ſo incumber'd with *Traffick* and *Merchandiſe*, that they employ no Thought upon *Creation* and *Providence*; ſo ſkilful and occupied in the Works of *Art*, that they neglect and overlook the Works of *Nature*. And even by thoſe who live in the *Country*, where the *Creation* is diſplay'd in an infinite Variety, how little is it minded or taken notice of! And that too not only by ignorant, unthinking Ruſticks and Peaſants, but by *many*, I wiſh I could not ſay *moſt*, Perſons of Birth, Fortune, polite Education, nay Parts and Learning! Even *Theſe* make no Reflection upon SERM. XI.

* Pſalm xxviii. 5.

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upon a Hemiſphere of Stars in the largeſt Horizon; a Proſpect, which to every one who uſes his Reaſon muſt needs repreſent the great and glorious God as *viſibly* appearing in theſe ſtupendous Effects of his Wiſdom and Power: Even *Theſe* make no other Uſe of Flowers, Herbs, Fruits, and Animals, than to ſee, ſmell, and eat them; when, if due Reflection were made upon them, they would ſerve to the nobleſt Purpoſes of Theory and Morality. The *Sea* is, if poſſible, more fertile of amazing Curioſities than the *Land*; the wide and vaſt Ocean, the immenſe World of Waters, and the innumerable ſurprizing Objects with which it abounds, giving us, if we would but *think*, the grandeſt and moſt ſublime Conceptions of the Divine Majeſty, Power, and Wiſdom. And yet *thoſe who* (as the *Pſalmiſt* * expreſſes it) *go down to the Sea in Ships, and occupy their Buſineſs in great Waters*, who there *ſee the Works of the Lord, and his Wonders in the Deep*, are generally obſerved to be more thoughtleſs, ſtupid, and profane, than any other Set of Mortals whatſoever. As little are the Works of *Providence*

* Pſalm cvii. 23, 24.

Providence regarded, as thoſe of *Creation*. SERM. *Lord, when thy Hand is lifted up, they will* XI. *not ſee* *: *Lifted up*, whether in *Mercy* or *Judgment*, though in never ſo ſignal and remarkable a Manner. Such is the Incogitancy of Mankind, altogether ſtrange and prodigious, altogether unjuſtifiable and inexcuſable. Which brings me to the *Fifth* Point, the *main* Point of all, I propoſed to conſider. But this, and what is to follow, muſt be deferred to the next Opportunity.

* Iſaiah xxvi. 11.

SERMON

SERMON XII.

The Glory of God in his Works of Creation and Providence: And the Uſe we ought to make of both.

The *Second* Sermon on this Subject.

PSAL. XCII. 5, 6.

O Lord, how great are thy Works! and thy Thoughts are very deep. A brutiſh Man knoweth not, neither doth a Fool conſider this.

I PROCEED now to the *Fifth* Point I propoſed to conſider, *viz.*

V. THAT thoſe who do not *reflect* upon theſe Things, and draw proper *Concluſions*

SERM. XII. *cluſions* from them, are fooliſh, brutal, and wicked. *A brutiſh Man knoweth not, neither doth a Fool conſider this.* Not to *make uſe* of our Reaſon is in effect to *have* none: *Vain is the Power which is not reduced into Act*, being an inconteſtable and ſelf-evident Maxim. Not to uſe our Reaſon *in the general* is very bad; but not to uſe it in the *moſt important*, and at the ſame time the *plaineſt* Inſtances, as theſe are of which I have been diſcourſing, is ſo extremely irrational and vicious, that ſcarce any thing can be imagined worſe. There is no *Learning* neceſſarily required to contemplate, and in a great meaſure to underſtand, theſe Things, and to draw juſt Conſequences from them. Common *Reaſon* is ſufficient, I mean to underſtand them in a good Degree; though *Learning* added to it will, no doubt, make great Improvements. When we are thus ſurrounded with inſtructive Objects; when the moſt uſeful and important Knowledge thus crouds and almoſt forces itſelf upon us; what can be more brutally ſtupid, more inexcuſably criminal, than to reject it, and turn away our Thoughts from it? According to the elegant Repreſentation of the

the *Pſalmiſt*, the Creation is vocal, and ſpeaks and cries aloud to us: *The Heavens declare the Glory of God; and the Firmament telleth*, or *reporteth, his Handy-work**: For ſo it ought to be tranſlated; not *ſheweth*, as it is falſely render'd in both our *Engliſh* Verſions. *There is no Speech* (i. e. no *Nation*, or *People*,) *where their Voice is not heard*†; (i. e. *might* be *heard*, and *underſtood* too, by every body, if every body would *liſten* and *attend* to it.) *Their Sound is gone out into all Lands, and their Words unto the End of the World*‡. This *Voice of Nature* is the *Univerſal Language*, intelligible to all Mankind; not proper, as other Languages are, to this or that *particular* Country. Should a Man paſs through all the Rooms of a magnificent and nobly-furniſhed Palace, abounding with numberleſs Beauties and Curioſities; ſhould he paſs through them, and *only* paſs through them, without taking the leaſt notice of any thing there; would he not be thought to deſerve the Name of a *Beaſt*, rather than of a *Man*? And yet what is the moſt magnificent *Palace* to the Fabrick of the *Univerſe*? What is

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* Pſalm xix. 1. † Ver. 2. ‡ Ver. 3.

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is *Art* to *Nature*? the Works of *Man* compared with the Works of *God*?

BUT theſe latter are *common* and *vulgar*, ſeen *every day*, and by *every body*. What if they *are*? They are never the leſs excellent and wonderful for *that*. Since they are *in themſelves* ſo *admirable*, the Folly and Guilt too of *not admiring* them, nay of neglecting and deſpiſing them, only becauſe they are *common*, can itſelf be never too much *admired*, as well as lamented. That we ſhould *at all* admire *uncommon* Things merely for being ſo, is a Weakneſs and Imperfection of our Nature; but that we ſhould admire them *only*, is great Folly, and in this Inſtance a great Sin likewiſe. "We con-
"verſe every Day with Wonders and Mi-
"racles, (ſays the incomparably learned, and pious, and every way excellent Lord Chief Juſtice *Hale*) "no leſs admirable, if
"rightly conſidered, than many of thoſe
"Points of Faith which a [mere] Natu-
"raliſt will not believe. For the Footſteps
"of the Omnipotence and Wiſdom of God
"are in every thing we ſee and hear: On-
"ly here is the Blindneſs of Man, that he
"looks not diligently into Things of ordi-
"nary

" nary Occurrence, but paſſeth them over of courſe. If the Sun ſhould ſtand ſtill but one Hour, it were a Thing that all the World would obſerve, and be aſtoniſhed at; yet the continual Motion of the ſame is a greater *Miracle*, if rightly conſider'd, than that." He cannot mean a Miracle, as the Word is ordinarily and ſtrictly uſed; for that implies ſomething uncommon, and contrary to the uſual Courſe of Nature; but a *greater Wonder* in and of itſelf: And in that Senſe it is certainly true. To which I add: Should a *Comet* appear, what Gazing would there be! But the *Sun* is minded by almoſt nobody. And yet the Comet is as *natural* as the Sun, and the Sun in Truth and Reality at leaſt *as* wonderful as the Comet; wonderful *in itſelf*, and of infinite Benefit to *us*; whereas the other is of no Uſe or Benefit to us at all. Did we think and reaſon like Creatures truly rational, theſe *common* Things would not be the leſs admired for being common. I have always been aſtoniſhed at the Stupidity, as well as Obſtinacy and Perverſeneſs, of the *Jews*, eſpecially in their Journeyings through the Wilderneſs; provoking God, as they

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did, when they were conducted by his *immediate* Hand, by his extraordinary particular Providence; irreclaimable in ſpite of perpetual Signs and ſupernatural Works, and continually rebelling in the midſt of Miracles; *Miracles*, ſtrictly and properly ſuch. But my Surprize ceaſes, while I am meditating upon this Subject. It ſeems, Miracles were ſo common and familiar to them, that they became, in a manner, no Miracles at all. And did that excuſe them? The Vengeance of God inflicted upon them for ſuch their Stupidity and Rebellion ſhews it did not. The Caſe is in effect the ſame, as to all Mankind, with regard to the Things we are now conſidering.

THE Mention of this leads us to conſider, though a little by way of Digreſſion, the Difference between the Proofs and Evidences from the ſtanding Courſe and Order of Things, and the Proofs and Evidences from *Miracles*. By the *former* we prove the Being of *God*, of *Creation*, and *Providence*; by the *other* we prove a *Revelation* from him. Of the *firſt* enough has been ſaid already: And as for the *ſecond*, it is neceſſary that God ſhould interpoſe in an extraordinary

traordinary Manner, by ſomewhat diſturb- SERM.
ing the Frame of Nature, or performing XII.
Works beyond the Operation of ſecond Cauſes, when he is to convince Mankind that it is He who ſpeaks, and is ſetting his Seal to a new Revelation. This *laſt* indeed is *likewiſe* a Proof of a God, and of his Omnipotence; for a Revelation *from* God muſt ſhew there *is* one, and the wonderful Works muſt declare the Worker *of* them: But the *firſt* prove no *Revelation* from him, but only his *Being*, *Power*, *Wiſdom*, &c. In ſhort, his *ordinary* Works demonſtrate his *Exiſtence*, and thoſe of his *Attributes* which I mention'd; his *extraordinary* Works prove *that*, and *thoſe*, and ſomething *more*, viz. a *Revelation* of his *Will*, a *Religion* introduced, or a *Meſſage* ſent by him. Should a Man pretend to be *ſent* by God, he would give no Evidence of his being ſo, by pointing to the *regular* Courſe of *Nature*, and the *ordinary* Occurrences of *Providence*, however wonderful *in themſelves*; and that for this Reaſon, *becauſe* they *are* ordinary and common; and beſides, they might as well be appealed to by any body elſe, as by him. And therefore again this is no Argument at

SERM. XII. all: But pretending to be ſent by God, and working *Miracles* by his *extraordinary* and *ſupernatural* Power, he produces the Broad Seal of Heaven, and ſufficiently proves himſelf to act and ſpeak by a Divine Commiſſion. But to return.

WHAT if, after all, the moſt *obvious* Works of God in the *Creation*, thoſe with which we are daily *converſant*, ſhould *not* be ſo *vulgar* and *common* as they are *vulgarly* and *commonly* imagined? So far are they from being ſuch, that there is not *one* of them, not the *leaſt* and *loweſt* of them, but contains many *uncommon* Curioſities, altogether *new* and *extraordinary*. This may ſeem a *Paradox*, yet nothing is more true and certain. They are *common* and *ordinary* in *one* reſpect, *uncommon* and *extraordinary* in *another*: So that my Aſſertion implies no Contradiction. The *Surfaces*, the *Outſides* of theſe Things are *common*, as being the perpetual Objects of our outward unaſſiſted Senſes. And even *theſe*, as I ſaid, are *ſtupendous*, notwithſtanding their *Commonneſs*; and it is the Height of Folly in us not to think them ſo, and not to make due Reflections upon them, for no Reaſon but becauſe

cauſe they are continually before us. Not only the heavenly Bodies above, but every Fly, Ant, or Spider below, are admirable, if rightly conſidered, even as they appear to our naked Eyes: But let the *former* be view'd by the Help of Teleſcopes or Perſpective-Glaſſes, the *latter* by the Help of Microſcopes or Magnifying-Glaſſes, (Inſtruments, by the way, among many others, with which the *Providence* of God has wonderfully furniſh'd us) and what a delightful Scene of new and before undiſcover'd Wonders is diſcloſed to us! Here we diſcern that *God's Thoughts*, even in *Creation*, are *very deep:* We penetrate deeper and deeper into them, being ſtill entertained with an amazing Variety; and yet can never come to the Bottom and Inſide of them, the *internal* Eſſence and Conſtitution of Things being utterly unknown to us; as I obſerved in my laſt Diſcourſe under another Head, and upon another Occaſion. SERM. XII.

In like manner, as to the Works of *Providence*, or rather of *Nature* and *Providence* in *conjunction*. That Rain and Sunſhine, wet Weather and dry, ſhould ſucceed each

SERM. XII. other as they do, ſeems to have nothing curious, ſtrange, or extraordinary in it; but to be every way, in all reſpects, *vulgar* and *common*. And yet if this Matter were well look'd into, perhaps it would appear that, for any thing our Reaſon or Philoſophy can ſhew to the contrary, the more *Rain* there has been on the one ſide, or *Drought* on the other, the more, according to the natural Tendency of Things, there is ſtill like to be of either: Becauſe the moiſter the Earth is, the more Matter there is for the Sun to exhale in Clouds, and ſo the more Rain to be ſtill poured upon the Earth. And on the reverſe, there is the leſs Proſpect of Showers after a Drought or Heat of long Continuance. And yet we ſee in fact the Caſe is quite otherwiſe; Rain and fair Weather ſucceeding each other, for the Uſe and Benefit of Mankind. But, ſay *Naturaliſts*, the watry Particles are alternately carried off, and brought back again by the Wind, from and to one Part of the World, to and from another. Be it ſo: But who *directs* that Wind, and *makes it blow* this or that way, *under Heaven?* What is this Anſwer of theirs, but ſaying it is ſo, *becauſe* it

it is ſo? And what *Philoſophy* is that? If I am aſk'd, where is my Philoſophy, in putting it upon the Foot I do, that is, reſolving it into the Power and Act of God, which is of all things the moſt *unphiloſophical*; I anſwer, Where indeed? I do no not *put* it *upon* Philoſophy, but upon *Providence*; becauſe I think no *Philoſophy* can account for it, and I am ſure *Providence* can. The great ſtable Frame of the *Univerſe* indeed, (or, to go no further, the Syſtem in which we are more immediately concerned, the Sun, the Moon, Earth, and other Planets) is conſtant and regular, according to the Laws of Gravitation, Motion, and Mechaniſm which the infinitely powerful and wiſe Creator has impreſſed upon them: But it is quite otherwiſe with this *our* Atmoſphere, and the various Meteors included in it: And it is hard to ſay whether the Conſtancy and Regularity of the *one*, or the Inconſtancy and Irregularity of the *other*, claim moſt of our Admiration. In the *firſt* God interpoſes not at all: I ſay *interpoſes*; for *ſupporting* and *upholding* them in their Being, and regular conſtant Motions and Operations, cannot be properly called by that Name: But SERM. XII.

SERM. XII. in the *laſt* he directly and properly *interpoſes*, by turning and changing, ſhifting and altering; and thus *Fire and Hail, Snow and Vapour, Wind and Storms fulfil his Word* *. *He maketh the Clouds to aſcend from the Ends of the Earth; he maketh Lightnings for the Rain, bringing the Winds out of his Treaſuries* †. *He ruleth the Raging of the Sea; he ſtilleth the Waves thereof, when they ariſe* ‡. And again, *At his Word the ſtormy Wind ariſeth, which lifteth up the Waves thereof* ‖. By theſe his Inſtruments he gives Bleſſings or Plagues, according as Men deſerve either; gives Plenty, or Famine, to a righteous or ſinful Land; gives Defeat, or Victory, to Fleets and Armies; determines the Fate of Kings and Kingdoms, of Nations, States, and Commonwealths; according to what he himſelf ſays, *Haſt thou enter'd into the Treaſures of the Snow? or haſt thou ſeen the Treaſures of the Hail? Which I have reſerved againſt the Time of Trouble, againſt the Day of Battle and War* §? And thus *it is the Lord that commandeth the Waters; it is the glorious God that maketh the Thunder.*** THE

* Pſalm cxlviii. 8. † cxxxv. 7. ‡ lxxxix. 9.
‖ cvii. 25. § Job xxxviii. 22, 23. ** Pſ. xxix. 3.

THE Mention of which *laſt* ſuggeſts a Conſideration which I think ſomewhat material. *Thunder* is, in the noble and elegant Language of Scripture, often called *the Voice of God:* That, and the *Lightning* which accompanies it, (the Effects of which *latter* are frequently amazing and terrible) the dreadful Noiſe of the *one*, the Flaſhes and Glare of the *other*, giving us the ſtrongeſt and moſt awful Ideas of his glorious and tremendous Majeſty. The *Atheiſts* pretend to laugh at this Notion of ours: *Pretend*, I ſay; for, in truth, SERM. XII.

*Hi ſunt qui trepidant, & ad omnia fulgura pallent.**

They ſee and hear *Lightning* and *Thunder* with more Dread, than the truly Religious: The *laſt-mentioned* indeed are *aw'd* by them, as they ought to be, and upon ſuch Occaſions *lift up their Hearts* to God with holy Fear and Reverence: Thoſe *others tremble* and are *terrified*, being conſcious that this *Artillery of Heaven* may be juſtly levelled againſt their own guilty Heads. However, I ſay, they *pretend* to laugh at theſe *ſuperſtitious*

* JUVENAL, Sat. XIII.

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ſtitious Notions, as they call them. *Thunder* and *Lightning* (ſay they) are merely *natural*, as much ſo as *Rain* or *Sunſhine:* And how is there *more of God* in theſe, than in any thing elſe? 'Tis begging the Queſtion; and *ſuppoſing*, not *proving*, a God. Doubtleſs theſe Things are *natural*; we never pretended they are *miraculous*. But ſtill there is *more of God* in *them* than in *other Things*; becauſe (as I ſaid) they give us ſuch ſtrong Impreſſions of his great, glorious, and *terrible Majeſty*. And therefore the *ancient* Heathen, both *Greeks* and *Latins*, (whom theſe *modern* Heathen would be thought ſo much to admire) diſtinguiſh the ſupreme God from their imaginary inferior and ſubordinate ones, by the appropriated Title of the *Thunderer*. As to what is objected about *Begging the Queſtion*, (which is, upon all Occaſions, *their* Way of arguing, not *ours)* we have demonſtrated the Being of a God by *other* Arguments: *They*, not *We*, beg the Queſtion, by ſaying and ſuppoſing there is *no* God, without the leaſt Shadow of Proof ſo much as pretended to; unleſs Cavilling, Buffoonry, and Blaſphemy, may be call'd *Proofs*. But we, having *proved* that there

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is one, may very properly call *Thunder* by the Name of *his Voice*, ſince he himſelf does ſo in *Scripture*, which we have likewiſe proved to be *his Word*. See how the Royal *Pſalmiſt* diſplays the Glory and Majeſty of the great God upon this Subject; I mean that of Clouds and Storms, Lightning and Thunder, *&c.* in ſuch elegant and noble, lofty and ſublime Expreſſions, that the beſt Eloquence and Poetry of the *Greek* and *Latin* Writers, however in itſelf excellent, appears in compariſon flat and inconſiderable; to omit very many other Paſſages of Scripture, which ſpeak to the ſame Purpoſe. *Then the Earth ſhook and trembled; the Foundations alſo of the Hills moved, and were ſhaken, becauſe he was wroth. There went a Smoke out of his Noſtrils, and Fire out of his Mouth devoured; Coals were kindled by it. He bowed the Heavens, and came down; and Darkneſs was under his Feet. And he rode upon a Cherub,* (implying, no doubt, that God makes uſe of the Miniſtry of Angels, in Winds, and Tempeſts, and upon other ſuch-like Occaſions: *He rode upon a Cherub,) and did fly; yea he did fly upon the Wings of the Wind. He made Darkneſs his ſecret*

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ſecret Place; his Pavilion round about him were dark Waters, and thick Clouds of the Skies. At the Brightneſs that was before him his thick Clouds paſſed, Hailſtones and Coals of Fire. The Lord alſo thundered in the Heavens, and the Higheſt gave HIS VOICE, *Hailſtones and Coals of Fire. Yea he ſent out his Arrows, and ſcattered them; he ſhot forth Lightnings, and diſcomfited them. Then the Chanels of Waters were ſeen, and the Foundations of the World were diſcovered; at thy Rebuke, O Lord, at the Blaſting of the Breath of thy Noſtrils.** — But to return from this; which is ſomewhat, though not much, *digreſſive* from what I was juſt now conſidering. *Rain* and *Sunſhine*, notwithſtanding their *Commonneſs*, are by St. *Paul* aſcribed to the *Providence* of God, and made an Argument not only of his Being, but of his Interpoſing in the Affairs of the World. *Neverthleſs* HE LEFT NOT HIMSELF WITHOUT WITNESS, *in that he did Good, and gave us Rain from Heaven, and fruitful Seaſons, filling our Hearts with Food and Gladneſs* †. And Men's not reflecting upon theſe Works of God, both in *Creation* and *Providence*,

* Pſalm xviii, 7, 8, &c. † Acts xiv. 17.

vidence, which I have mention'd, (and it would be an endleſs Taſk even to mention them *all)* is, as I have, I think, ſufficiently, though briefly ſhewn, ſottiſhly and brutally *ſtupid*, moſt unjuſtifiably and inexcuſably *wicked*. I ſay *wicked*, as well as *fooliſh*. That the Word *Fool* here uſed is in Scripture perpetually taken in a *moral*, rather than a *natural* Senſe, and as relating to the *Will*, rather than the *Underſtanding*, muſt be known to all who know any thing of the *Scriptures*. And that the *Guilt* of Inattention, Careleſſneſs, and Negligence in the Caſe now before us is very great, appears from the two Paſſages, Part of which I above cited, but poſtponed the other Part to this Place, to which it more properly belongs. With reference to *Creation*, after the *Pſalmiſt* has ſaid, *They regard not the Works of the Lord, nor the Operation of his Hands*, he immediately ſubjoins, *Therefore ſhall he break them down, and not build them up* *. With reference to *Providence*, after the *Prophet* has ſaid, *Lord, when thy Hand is lifted up, they will not ſee*; he preſently adds, *But they* SHALL *ſee, and be aſhamed* †. Men SERM. XII. are

* Pſalm xxviii. 5. † Iſaiah xxvi. 11.

SERM. XII. are *puniſh'd* for this Negligence and Inobſervation; therefore it is *ſinful*. And beſides, the Nature of the Thing ſufficiently ſhews this. In a *rational* Creature every thing muſt be *morally evil* which is *irrational*, becauſe it is an *Abuſe* of Reaſon: As we have abundantly proved *this* to be.

VI. I PROCEED now, in the *Sixth* and *Laſt* Place, to make ſuch *Improvements* of what has been diſcourſed, as ſhall ſeem proper to influence both our *Faith* and *Practice*.

1. AND *firſt*, A wiſe and good Man will not only be not negligent and careleſs in theſe Matters, but will *ſtudy* them *diligently*, and *ſearch deep* into them. *The Works of the Lord are great*, SOUGHT OUT *of all them that have Pleaſure therein* *. And *whoſo is wiſe will* PONDER *theſe things; even they ſhall underſtand the Loving-kindneſs of the Lord* †; and his *Wiſdom* and *Power*, as well as his *Loving-kindneſs*. Here, *viz.* in the Works of *Nature* and *Providence*, is Matter of endleſs Curioſity and Adoration. As to the *firſt*, the Subject (as I ſaid) is infinite and inexhauſtible. And for the *other*, let any

* Pſalm cxi. 2. † cvii. *ult.*

any Man conſider the Train of *Providences* deduced through the Old and New Teſtament: The *Creation* of *Man*, and the *Reſtoration* of him after the *Fall*; the Univerſal *Deluge* or *Flood*, and the *Renewal* of Human Race by the Preſervation of one ſingle Family; the Calling of *Abraham*, and the *Separating*, and, as it were, *Conſecrating*, the People of the *Jews* to be a Light to all the Nations round about them; the Hiſtory of *Joſeph*; the *Deliverance* of the *Iſraelites* out of *Egypt*; their *Paſſage* through the *Red Sea*, and then through the *Wilderneſs*; the ſurprizing *Diſpenſations* both of *Mercy* and *Judgments*, ſhewn to that People through the Courſe of ſo many Ages; the Scheme of *Prophecies* relating to the *Meſſiah*, even from the *Fall* of the *Firſt Adam* to the *Appearance* of the *Second*; the *gradual Clearneſs* of thoſe Prophecies, ſtill more and more, as the Time of their *Completion* drew nearer and nearer; the wonderful Completion *itſelf*, or *Fulfilling* of them all, even the obſcureſt of them, in the Perſon of our *Saviour*; the Predictions, however dark at firſt, being interpreted and explain'd by the *Event*. Upon ſuch a View as this, how juſtly

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SERM. XII. juſtly indeed may we cry out, *O Lord, how great are thy Works! Thy Thoughts are very deep.* And though we cannot fathom the Depths of either, yet we may ſee and know enough of both, to keep us firm and conſtant in our Faith and Obedience. It is commonly ſaid, (and rightly enough) that there are *two Books* of *God*, i. e. of which He is the Author; the Book of *Nature*, which is the *Creation*; and that of his *Word*, which is the *Holy Scripture*. Fair and noble Volumes they are Both; and if we read and ſtudy them as we ſhould do, we cannot fail of acquiring the trueſt Wiſdom and Knowledge; of being wiſe in *Learning*, in *Hiſtory*, in *Philoſophy*, and *Natural Science*, and (which is infinitely better than all the reſt) *wiſe unto Salvation*.

2*dly*, IF God be thus great, glorious, and wonderful, in his *Works*, in *Creation*, and *Providence*; what is he in *Himſelf?* in his own internal, inviſible, infinite, incomprehenſible *Eſſence?* What He is, we cannot underſtand or imagine. All that even the *inſpired* Writers, and He himſelf, could do was to repreſent him to our Fancies by *ſenſible* and *corporeal* Images, tranſcendently great

great and glorious, yet falling infinitely ſhort of Truth and Reality. Though that of the Prophet *Habakkuk* * may ſeem to be of the ſame Nature with what I above cited from the 18th *Pſalm*, deſcribing his Power by the *external* Effects of it; yet ſince *here* is no Mention (as it is *there*) of *Clouds*, *Thunder*, &c. but the Phraſes are much more figurative, and allegorical, in *this* Paſſage than in *that*; I rather take it to intimate the ineffable Glory and Majeſty of the Divine Nature *in* and *of* itſelf, though repreſented to us by Expreſſions of *local Motion*, and other *ſenſible* Images, in Condeſcenſion to our Capacities, to which it *can* be no otherwiſe repreſented. And what *ſublime* Expreſſions are they! With what Ideas muſt the Soul be ſwell'd, and lifted up, at the Reading or Hearing of them! *God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. His Glory covered the Heavens, and the Earth was full of his Praiſe. And his Brightneſs was as the Light: He had* Rays or Streams of Splendor (for ſo it ought to be render'd, not *Horns*, as it is moſt incongruouſly in our Verſion) *coming out of his*

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* Chap. iii.

SERM. XII. *his Hand*; [or *Side*] *and there was the Hiding of his Power.* (Which laſt very difficult and obſcure Paſſage I have not Time to conſider.) *Before him went the Peſtilence, and burning Coals went forth at his Feet. He ſtood and meaſured the Earth; he beheld and drove aſunder the Nations: And the everlaſting Mountains were ſcattered, the perpetual Hills did bow: His Ways are everlaſting* *. I do not forget, that *this* and many *other* ſuch-like Paſſages in the Holy Scriptures, as alſo ſuch as that in the 18th *Pſalm* above cited, have a *prophetical* View to God's taking Vengeance on his Enemies, delivering his Servants, ſome great Change in the State of Things, particularly in the *Church*, &c. But I as well remember, that many Texts, eſpecially in the Writings of the *Prophets*, have more Views than one; and ſo I need ſay no more of *this.* What then muſt *God* be, who is thus *deſcribed?* And what muſt that *Word* of God be, which thus *deſcribes* him? No *Human* Writings can equal it, or even come near it. What has dry, meagre *Atheiſm*, or *Infidelity*, to ſhew like *this?* It is only *Fancy*, they will ſay,

* Ver. 3, 4, &c.

ſay, the Heat of our own Imagination. But have we not *proved* that there is a *God?* and that the *Bible* is his *Word?* We *have*; and let them diſprove it, if they are able. With this which I have now cited I may be allowed juſt to mention a Paſſage or two more, of the ſame Strain. *O that thou wouldſt rent the Heavens, that thou wouldſt come down; that the Mountains might flow down at thy Preſence*; ſays the noble and ſublime Prophet *Iſaiah* *. And elſewhere, *Thus ſaith the High and Lofty One, that inhabiteth Eternity* †, &c. And again, *Thus ſaith the Lord, Heaven is my Throne, and Earth is my Footſtool: Where is the Houſe that ye build unto me? and where is the Place of my Reſt? For all thoſe things hath mine Hand made* ‡, &c. And in that parallel Place, the great King *Solomon*'s divine Addreſs to God at the Dedication of the Temple: *But will God indeed dwell on the Earth? Behold the Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain thee: How much leſs this Houſe which I have built* ‖? — I hope I may be excuſed for juſt hinting at theſe Things,

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* Chap. lxiv. 1. † lvii. 15. ‡ lxvi. 1, 2, &c.
‖ 1 Kings viii. 27.

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ſince there is ſo near a Relation between the two *Books* of *God* before mentioned, the *Creation*, and the *Scriptures*; and ſince he has *magnified* not only his *Name*, i. e. his *Eſſence*, (of which under this Particular I have been more immediately ſpeaking) but his *Word* too *above all things*.

3*dly*, IF there be *ſo many Myſteries* in *Nature*, it cannot, one would think, be very ſtrange or unreaſonable, that there ſhould be *ſome* in *Religion*: Eſpecially when the Subject is the *Nature* and *Eſſence* of *God*; which (whether there be a *Trinity*, for example, or no) muſt to *Us* be ever incomprehenſible. *Infinite* and *Eternal* muſt always be ſo. What then ſhall we ſay to our new *Philoſophers*, (in their own Conceit, I mean, for none are farther from really deſerving the Title) who declare they will believe nothing but what they can *comprehend?* O theſe mighty *Comprehenders!* Who would not recognize the Depth of their Underſtandings, reverence them, and fall down before them? But I have ſo often upon *other* Subjects had occaſion to expoſe the abſurd Preſumption of theſe Men, that I ſhall ſay no more of it at preſent.

4*thly*,

4*thly*, SINCE *God's Thoughts are very deep*, even in *Creation* and *Providence*, and much more in *Redemption*, in the *Goſpel*, in the *Myſtery of Godlineſs*; what Madneſs, as well as Impiety, muſt it be in our modern *Infidels* (the *Philoſophers* aforeſaid) not only not to revere and adore his unfathomable Counſels, but to *dictate* to him (as it were) in ſo dogmatical and magiſterial a Manner; declaring that he *muſt*, or muſt *not*, do this or that, according as it is agreeable or diſagreeable to what they call *Reaſon*, i. e. their own Humours and Fancies, Luſts and Vices! And this too in direct Oppoſition to what God has expreſsly declared in *Scripture*, which we have *proved* to be his *Word*. God, they tell us, (in Senſe at leaſt, if not in the very Expreſſions) *muſt* pardon Sin, upon Repentance at leaſt; and ſo there was no Need of a *Saviour*: Nay, ſome of them will have it, that he *muſt* not, and *cannot*, puniſh Sin at all; though he has moſt ſolemnly proclaimed and proteſted that he will. Fornication, and ſuch-like Practices, they ſay, are agreeable to *Nature*; therefore God *cannot* forbid them; (though he SERM. XII.

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has forbidden them;) it would be *arbitrary*, if he ſhould. If there was ſuch a Neceſſity of *Jeſus Chriſt*'s Coming as is pretended, he *ought* to have come *ſooner*; and the like. This, it ſeems, is *Reaſoning*: An humble Submiſſion to infinite Wiſdom is abſurd and ridiculous. I am ſenſible that I have ſeveral times, upon other Occaſions, taken notice of *this* alſo; and therefore do not enlarge upon it, but only mention it at preſent. It is, however, ſuch a Prodigy of Abſurdity and Inſolence, a Thing ſo monſtrous, ſuch an Outrage upon *Common Senſe*, as well as upon *Religion*, that it can ſcarce be too often taken notice of. A Curioſity, I think, it is peculiar to this wonderfully *philoſophical* and *enlighten'd* Age, in which *We* have the Happineſs to live. For Men thus to preſcribe and dictate to the God who made them——What Frenzy of Irreligion is this? It is ſuch an Inſtance of Profaneneſs, Blaſphemy, Folly, and Madneſs, as ought for ever to be exploded, for ever to be expoſed to the Indignation and Abhorrence, the Scorn and Hiſſing of Mankind.

5. *Laſtly*,

5. *Laſtly*, If it be ſtupid, and brutal, not to know and underſtand theſe Things of which we have been diſcourſing, as I have not only from this *Text*, but from *other* Scriptures, and even from *natural Reaſon*, proved it is; what Sort of *Philoſophers* muſt they be, who deny, if not the *Being* of a *God*, yet *Creation*, or at leaſt *Providence*; as the *ancient* Epicureans *did*, and the *modern* Epicureans *do*? They call themſelves *Philoſophers*; but the *Pſalmiſt*, and right Reaſon too, call them *Fools* and *brutiſh*. *Profeſſing themſelves to be wiſe, they become Fools**. May God give them *Repentance to the Acknowledging of the Truth*†; that *They*, and *We*, and *all Creatures*, may join in one general *Chorus* of Praiſe and Thankſgiving to the

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come‡; ſaying,

Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the Gods, who is like unto thee; glorious in Holineſs, fearful in Praiſes, doing Wonders? ‖

Great and marvellous are thy Works, O Lord God Almighty: Juſt and true are thy Ways, thou King of Saints. §

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* Rom. i. 22. † 2 Tim. ii. 25. ‡ Rev. iv. 8.
‖ Exod. xv. 11. § Rev. xv. 3.

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To HIM, Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, Three Perſons and One God, be aſcribed (as is moſt due) by Men and Angels, all Honour and Glory, Adoration and Praiſe, Might, Majeſty, and Dominion, henceforth, and for evermore.

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SERMON XIII.

Of making RELIGION our chief Concern.

The *First* Sermon on this Subject.

MATTH. VI. 33.

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness.

THAT *Religion* is a *great* and *important Concern*, nay that it is our very *greatest* Concern, all who profess *Christianity* are ready to acknowledge: To *acknowledge*, I mean, for Argument's sake, in the way of Dispute or Speculation: Many glorious Things they are forward to speak of it; their Discourses about it are commonly *grave* and *serious*, nay very often *affectionate* and *pathetical*. And yet, notwithstanding SERM. XIII.

SERM. XIII. withſtanding all this, how *few* are there who are in earneſt about Religion in their *Behaviour* and *Actions!* How few that in fact live up to it as if they really thought it their chief Intereſt, as they pretend to believe; or who practiſe according to the Precept of our Bleſſed Saviour in my Text, *Seek ye firſt*, &c. Seek it *firſt*, i. e. *chiefly*, and *above* or *before* all *other* Things; make it the *main* Buſineſs of your Lives, the great *Aim* and *Mark* which your Actions *principally* drive at; ſo that no other Affair whatſoever ſtand in competition with it, or have an equal Place in your Affections. The Point of Doctrine therefore delivered in the *Text* is plainly this: *That Religion is our greateſt and moſt important Concern, and ought in the Conduct of our Lives to be regarded as ſuch.* A Subject, though very much *talk'd of* and *diſcourſed upon*, yet, I think, not ſo thoroughly diſcuſſed as it might be, and as I preſume it will be, after I ſhall have diſpatch'd theſe following *Particulars*, which I ſhall ſeverally ſpeak to in their Order.

I. I SHALL *explain* what is *meant* by thus *making Religion our chief Concern*, and *rectify* ſome *Miſtakes* about it.

II. I

II. I SHALL *prove* the Propoſition laid down, by *comparing* the Things of *this* Life with thoſe of the *next*. SERM. XIII.

III. BECAUSE to *diſplay* and *lay open* a Diſtemper is one Step to the *Cure* of it, I ſhall ſhew by inſtancing in *Particulars* what has been already hinted at in *general*; that, according to all Appearance, *Chriſtians* do *not* commonly *make Religion their chief Concern*, as they *ought* to do.

IV. I SHALL conſider the *Reaſons* why they do *not*.

V. I SHALL give ſome *Rules*, by the Obſervation of which they will act upon the Principle *here* laid down, and *ſeek firſt the Kingdom of God, and his Righteouſneſs*.

VI. I SHALL ſhew the happy *Effects* and *Conſequences* of it even in *this* Life.

BUT before we come to conſider them diſtinctly, it will be requiſite to *premiſe* this Obſervation, That in the Compariſons which may be made in the enſuing Diſcourſe between ſeveral Sorts of Perſons, the Caſe of thoſe who are *profligately wicked* is entirely

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ſet aſide, and *out of the Queſtion*. *They*, to be ſure, do not obſerve the Precept here given by our *Saviour*; and there is, in that reſpect, no Doubt or Difficulty concerning them. But there are *others* of *inferior* Claſſes in a ſinful Courſe, the Caſe of whom may not be ſo evident at firſt Sight: And a Compariſon between ſuch and the truly virtuous will be the *main* Subject of our preſent Enquiry. Which being briefly *premiſed*, I proceed according to the Method propoſed.

I. FIRST then, I am to *explain* what is *meant* by thus *making Religion our chief Concern*, and to *rectify* ſome *Miſtakes* about it. The *Nature* of this Duty was juſt touch'd upon in the Introduction to my Diſcourſe, but it is now to be more particularly conſidered. It conſiſts then in making *Religion* the *main Buſineſs* of our *Lives*, and the *controuling Principle* of our *Actions*; ſo as to be *uppermoſt* in our *Thoughts*, to be the moſt *habitual* and *familiar Object* of them; to make all *other* Affairs yield and give way to *this*; to have *Heaven* continually in our View, to look upon *that* as our *Home* and *Country*,

Country, and ourſelves to be only in a *Journey* thither; to be therefore but *little concern'd* for the *World*, nor at all *anxious* and *ſolicitous* about the *Events* of it; to do nothing but what either directly or indirectly tends to ſecure our everlaſting Intereſt, or at leaſt is conſiſtent with it; to love *God* with all our Hearts *here*, and above all things deſire to enjoy him *hereafter*. SERM. XIII.

THIS is the *Subſtance* of the Duty here enjoin'd; and becauſe it contains nothing intricate, the brief Account which I have given may be ſufficient. The only Difficulty lies in *rectifying* ſome *Miſtakes* which have been made concerning it: And the greateſt is of thoſe who think *Religion* conſiſts principally, if not wholly, in *religious Exerciſes* ſtrictly ſo call'd, ſuch as are *Prayer*, *Meditation*, *Reading* and *Hearing the Word of God*, and the like; and ſo are apt to imagine that they are obliged by the Command of my *Text* to ſpend *more* Time in *thoſe* Exerciſes than in *ſecular* Affairs: For how, ſay they, can we be ſaid to *make Religion our chief Concern*, unleſs we ſpend *more* Time in *that* than in any thing *elſe?* And this is the grand Error with relation

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to the Subject now before us; which has made ſome object againſt *Chriſtianity* as an impracticable Thing on the one hand, and occaſioned great Trouble and Uneaſineſs to ſome piouſly diſpoſed Chriſtians on the other. To give therefore a full Solution of this Matter, and a full State of the Caſe now before us, we muſt obſerve that the Fallacy lies in not *diſtinguiſhing* between two very diſtinct Things, I mean between being in a *Habit* of *Religion*, and being *actually* engaged in *religious Exerciſes* commonly ſo called. Were this Diſtinction duly made, it would appear very plain that we may make the Service of God and our eternal Intereſt *our chief Concern*, and yet not ſpend near the greateſt Part of our Time in *Devotion* and other ſpiritual Employments. For *Prayer*, *Meditation*, *Hearing* and *Reading the Word of God*, and the like, though excellent in themſelves, and abſolutely neceſſary, are neither the *only*, nor even the *beſt* Actions of Virtue and Goodneſs: So far from it, that we may ſerve God much *better* in many *other* Inſtances; for example, in Acts of *Mercy* and *Charity*: Which is plainly proved from hence, that whenever

whenever Acts of *Devotion* interfere with those of *Charity*, ſo that we cannot poſſibly perform *both*, the *latter* ought to take place of the *former*; according to that of the Prophet *Hoſea* *, quoted by our Saviour †, *I will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice:* By which it is not meant that he abſolutely *rejects* the *latter*, but only *prefers* the *former* before it, whenever they happen to come in Competition. And beſides, Acts of *Juſtice* and all other Virtues muſt neceſſarily take up ſome Portion of our Time: But to put it at the loweſt, we may employ the far greateſt Part of our Lives in the Buſineſs of our ordinary innocent and honeſt *Callings*, and in providing for ourſelves or Dependents; and yet ſtill make *Religion* our greateſt, our *chief Concern:* Becauſe the Buſineſs of ſuch a Calling no way interferes with the Practice of our Duty, provided we allow a reaſonable Time for our conſtant daily Devotion; which indeed muſt by no means be diſpenſed with upon the Account of any ſecular Affairs whatſoever. But *that* being taken care of, we are ſerving God, while we are doing our temporal Buſineſs; for SERM. XIII.

* Hoſea vi. 6. † Matth. ix. 13.

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for he himſelf hath not only permitted, but commanded us to be diligent and induſtrious in our Callings. The *main* Streſs and Weight of our Deſires may be directed to God, and the whole Syſtem of our Duty entirely performed, and yet but a *ſmall* Portion of our Time may be ſpent in ſolemn Devotion. This may be illuſtrated by an Inſtance in *temporal* Affairs. If a Man has any particular Aim or Deſign which he ſets his Heart upon above all others, that is ſaid to be his *chief Concern*, though he is far from employing *moſt* of his Time in the *actual* Uſe of the *Means* neceſſary for the Attainment of that *End*; becauſe the Nature of the Thing may not require it, nor ſo much as admit of it. To denominate this the *principal* Care and Buſineſs of his Life, it is enough that his Thoughts are *habitually* bent upon it, that he deſires it above all *other* Things; that, as often as he has Power and Opportunity, he uſes all Means conducive to it, and never any which he judges to be inconſiſtent with it. This, I ſay, is enough to denominate it his *chief Concern*, the *main* Buſineſs of his Life, though the *Time* he employs in the *actual* Proſecution

Proſecution of that Buſineſs may not be very conſiderable; becauſe, as I ſaid, the Nature of the Thing may not require it, nor even admit of it. And if this holds true in reſpect of temporal Things, it is much ſtronger in the Caſe now before us: Becauſe (as I obſerved) *Prayer* and *Meditation*, &c. are far from being the *only* Means of our obtaining eternal Happineſs; and ſo we may employ the greateſt Part of our Time in *Virtue* and *Goodneſs*, and yet but a ſmall Portion of it in the *actual Solemnity of Devotion*. We are doing our Duty, ſerving God, purſuing our everlaſting Intereſt, and proceeding in our Way to Heaven, even while we are engaged in the Buſineſs of our ordinary Callings, if in the midſt of that Buſineſs we are *habitually* religious, and *ſet our Affections on things above, not on things on the Earth* *. It is moreover to be obſerved, that from a Man's being careleſs and negligent in *temporal* Affairs it by no means follows that he ſets his Affections chiefly upon *ſpiritual:* So far otherwiſe, that it gives Suſpicion at leaſt of the direct contrary. It is confeſſed that a Perſon truly SERM. XIII.

* Col. iii. 2.

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religious and *heavenly-minded*, according to the Precept of my *Text*, may be too regardleſs of his *ſecular* Concerns. But then it muſt be confeſſed too, that this in itſelf is ſo far from being laudable, that it is ſinful: Though being in ſuch a Perſon rather a Sin of Infirmity, than a wilful one, and proceeding from a holy and pious Diſpoſition of Soul, (as a Fault may accidentally ſpring from a Virtue) it will queſtionleſs find an eaſy Pardon from Almighty God. But in *others* an indiſcreet Management of temporal Things proceeds from a quite different Principle; ſometimes from *Lazineſs*, and ſometimes from *Luxury*. We all know the Character which a very good *Hiſtorian* * gives of a very bad Man, *alieni appetens, ſui profuſus*. Parſimony is only *one Branch* of Covetouſneſs; and Covetouſneſs is very conſiſtent with Extravagance; though Parſimony is conſiſtent neither with the Sin of Extravagance, nor with the Virtue of Generoſity. A Man therefore may entirely neglect *Heaven*, and yet be negligent in his Conduct of *the Things upon Earth*: He may doat upon the Things themſelves,

* SALLUST.

themſelves, though by reaſon of his other Vices he be imprudent in the Management of them; ſo that in different Reſpects he may regard them *too much*, and yet not regard them *enough*. SERM. XIII.

THERE are ſome *other* Miſtakes upon this Subject, which, not being ſo material as the *former*, do not require ſo particular an Examination. Such is that of thoſe who think we are obliged by this Precept to be perpetually *talking* of religious Things in all Companies, and upon all Occaſions. It muſt be confeſſed indeed, that in the common Behaviour of Life the Fault is generally on the other Side; and it would be much better if pious Diſcourſe, rightly managed, had a greater Share in Converſation than it commonly has. But ſtill we may *make Religion our chief Concern*, and yet not be continually *talking about it*; and 'tis well if there be not more of *Hypocriſy* than *Piety* in ſome who proceed upon the contrary Principle. The Service of God and the Salvation of our Souls may be our greateſt, nay almoſt our only *Care*, and yet far from being the chief Subject of our *Converſation*; becauſe the Buſineſs we commonly confer

SERM. XIII. with others about, is, and muſt be, for the moſt part of a quite different Nature; and it is rather a *Reflection upon* Religion, than a real *Service to* it, to talk *religiouſly*, and at the ſame time talk *impertinently*.

ANOTHER Error, which indeed is nearly related to the *former*, is that of thoſe who condemn the innocent *Recreations* and *Amuſements* of Life, conceiving them to be *unlawful*, and inconſiſtent with the Practice of the Duty here recommended. As ſetting our Affections chiefly upon Heaven is conſiſtent (which we have ſhewn before) with the *Buſineſs* of human Life, ſo it is in ſome meaſure with its *Pleaſures* and *Delights*: Only the ſame Caution is to be uſed with regard to *both*, that neither engage too much of our Affections. To transfer the Caſe (as we did *above*) from *ſpiritual* to *temporal* Affairs, and from thoſe who *do* their Duty to thoſe who do *not*: Cannot a Man ſet his Heart upon getting an Eſtate, or a Poſt of Honour, and make that his chief, nay his only *Buſineſs*, and yet ſometimes divert himſelf with *Sports* and *Exerciſes*? It is ſo far exactly the ſame in the Caſe we are now conſidering. We may *ſeek firſt the Kingdom*

Kingdom of God and his Righteouſneſs, and yet ſometimes relax and unbend our Thoughts with *innocent Diverſions*. The Conſtitution both of our Bodies and Minds require ſomething of this, and neither can be truly in Health without it. SERM. XIII.

As to *melancholic* and *diſtemper'd* Perſons, and ſome other good Chriſtians, who thro' Error and Miſapprehenſion think they are not in ſuch a State as the Precept of my *Text* requires, only becauſe they find no *Pleaſure* in Religion, but rather the *contrary*; becauſe they meet with many *Difficulties* and *Impediments* in the Practice of it, and becauſe their Thoughts are *confuſed* and *perplexed* about it: I only obſerve at preſent, (though even this would be a full Anſwer to the Difficulty propoſed, were not the Perſons concerned extremely difficult to be ſatisfied) that if they are conſcious to themſelves of no wicked *Habit*, and are ſincerely troubled leſt they ſhould not *make Religion their chief Concern*, that very Trouble is itſelf a *Proof* that they *do* make it ſo; and if they heartily, and to the utmoſt of their Power, *endeavour* to perform their Duty, they actually *do* perform it.

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IF the Error *laſt mentioned* belongs ſometimes to Perſons *truly* religious, this which I am going to take notice of belongs to thoſe who (whatever they may ſeem or pretend to be) are in reality of a quite *different* Character. I mean thoſe who place a great deal of *Sanctity* in enquiring into the Lives of *Others*, paſſing very ſevere and unchriſtian Reflections very often upon Perſons much better than themſelves. This they imagine (or at leaſt would be *thought* to imagine) ſhews a mighty and more than ordinary Concern for *Religion*; which they would not think, did they duly conſider that nothing can ſhew a true Concern *for* it, which is directly contrary *to* it: As this moſt certainly is, if that may be ſaid to be contrary to *Religion*, which is always contrary to *Modeſty*, *Humility*, and *Charity*, and very often to common *Juſtice*.

HAVING thus, in my *firſt* general Head, *explained* what is *meant* by *making Religion our chief Concern*, and *rectified* ſome *Miſtakes* about it; I proceed in the *ſecond* Place,

II. To *prove* the Propoſition laid down, by *comparing* the Things of *this* Life with thoſe

thoſe of the *next*. The Propoſition laid down was *this:* That "*Religion is our* "*greateſt and moſt important Concern, and* "*ought in the Conduct of our Lives to be re-* "*garded as ſuch.*" To *prove* which muſt be the Buſineſs of the *ſecond* general Head. Now that thoſe Things ought to be moſt regarded which are moſt valuable, is a Truth too plain to need any Proof or Illuſtration: And that the Things of the next Life are incomparably more valuable than thoſe of this, is but very little leſs evident. It is indeed ſo evident in itſelf, and yet ſo much has been ſaid upon it in a great Variety of pious Treatiſes, that it may ſeem a very ſuperfluous, as well as eaſy Taſk, to inſiſt now upon ſo plain, and yet ſo worn and beaten a Subject. But as it is not *Elegancy*, but *Edification*, which we ought to endeavour after in Diſcourſes of this Nature; and ſince it is too manifeſt by ſad Experience, that how undoubted ſoever theſe Truths may be, and how often ſoever we may be reminded of them, all Admonitions are few and little enough to influence our Practice in the moſt important Concern of our Lives; it may not be improper to

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SERM. XIII. reinforce theſe uſeful Conſiderations, and perſuade Men to judge rightly in order to their living virtuouſly: For in reality all our Miſery proceeds from our making a wrong Eſtimate of Things, and not valuing them according to their true and intrinſick Worth. Now in the Compariſon I propoſe to make, it muſt be obſerved before we enter upon it, that we all along ſet aſide all *ſinful* Pleaſures, Honours, and Profits of the World; the Caſe concerning them being ſo plain, that they are wholly out of the Queſtion: But even to make the *beſt* of this Life, and conſidering it as relating even to the *beſt* of Men, the Advantages of *Religion* are infinitely preferable, becauſe they are,

1. MORE ſuitable to the *Excellence* and *Dignity* of our *Nature*.

2. LESS *mix'd* and *interrupted*.

3. MORE *ſatisfactory* in the *Poſſeſſion*: And,

4. MORE *durable* in the *Continuance*.

1. AND *firſt*, They are more ſuitable to the *Excellence* and *Dignity* of our *Nature*. It will, I preſume, be eaſily acknowledged that

that our *Souls*, by which we are allied to the *Angels*, nay by which we are the *Image of God* himſelf, are more noble and excellent than our *Bodies*, by which we are related to *the Beaſts that periſh*. And it is no leſs evident, that thoſe Entertainments which are agreeable to the *divine* Part of us muſt be more eligible than thoſe which are wholly adapted to the Gratification of the *brutal*. Much more valuable therefore muſt be the Pleaſures of *Reaſon*, than the Pleaſures of *Senſe*: Far better the Satisfaction of *Thinking* and *Reflection*, of diſcovering *Truth* and chuſing *Good*, of informing the *Underſtanding* and rectifying the *Will*, of contemplating *God* and endeavouring to be like *Him*; than the Satisfaction of *ſenſible* Delights, and all the Amuſements and Recreations of the *World*. Theſe *latter* indeed may be, nay muſt be in ſome meaſure uſed, while we are in this frail and corruptible Fleſh: But then it is our *Infirmity* that they muſt; this is our weak Side, and theſe Gratifications are mean and ignoble. Whereas thoſe *other* I mentioned, which are not *corporeal*, but purely *rational* and *intellectual*, are not our *Infirmity*, but our *Glory*, are ſuited

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2. THEY are leſs *mixed* and *interrupted*. The higheſt Satisfaction which the *World* can afford is temper'd and allay'd with great Uneaſineſs: Its choiceſt Sweets are daſh'd with Gall and Wormwood, and its beſt Pleaſures ſuſpended by long Intervals of Pain: Nay, its beſt Pleaſures are in a great Degree *founded upon* Pain. But it is quite otherwiſe with the Delights which ariſe from *Religion*. Even *theſe* indeed may be, and are in ſome meaſure *interrupted*, while we are in this imperfect State: Sickneſs, and other calamitous Accidents, which are the neceſſary Attendants of Mortality, muſt and will be ſome Obſtruction or Impediment to them. But then there is the greateſt Difference imaginable between *this* and the *former* Inſtance. The Pleaſures and other Advantages *of* the World depend wholly *upon* the World, and ſo outward Accidents may, and continually do, utterly deſtroy them, and that too for a conſiderable Time, though they may be afterwards repair'd: But thoſe of *Religion* do not *depend upon*

upon the World, though they may be in some degree *affected by* it; and so cannot even for a Time (any *considerable* Time I mean) be wholly *destroy'd* by it, though they may be *lessened* and *retarded* in their Operation. When the *former* are interrupted, 'tis very often at least like a *Wound* in one's Body, separating the Parts from each other, which cannot without much Time and Pain be re-united: But the Interruption of the *latter* is only like the dividing of the *Air* by an Arrow passing through; the one flies along, and the other immediately closes. And thus it is even in *this* Life, but in the *next* it is infinitely better: Even *Here* the Pleasures of *Religion* have but little Allay, in comparison of *worldly* Advantages; but *There* they have no Allay at all. The Happiness of *Heaven* is perfectly *unmixed* and *uninterrupted:* The Pleasure of pure *Spirits* is, like those Spirits *themselves*, *pure*, *simple*, and *uncompounded*; as, on the contrary, that of the *Body* is like the Body, *gross* and *mingled*, consisting of *opposite* and *disagreeing* Elements, which are *Checks* and *Allays* upon each other. SERM. XIII.

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3. THE Advantages of *Religion* are infinitely preferable to thoſe which are *temporal*, becauſe they are more *ſatisfactory* in the Poſſeſſion. This Reaſon partly reſults from thoſe with which it is joined, from *thoſe two* which *go before* it, and from *that* which *follows* it. The Advantages we are ſpeaking of are therefore ſo *ſatisfactory* in the *Poſſeſſion*, becauſe they are ſo ſuitable to the *Dignity* and *Excellence* of our Nature, ſo little *mix'd* and *interrupted*, and ſo *durable* in their *Continuance*. Theſe *three* Things, I ſay, greatly contribute to render the *Poſſeſſion* of them *ſatisfactory*; but then *other* Circumſtances concur, which do not ſo properly belong to any one of thoſe Particulars. With reſpect to all Sorts of *worldly* Happineſs, we are apt to be *eager* in the *Expectation*; and when we are ſo, we ſeldom fail to be *diſappointed* in the *Enjoyment*. Few Things of this Kind anſwer our Expectation; the Happineſs which our Fancies figured to us rarely comes up to the Scheme we drew, but the *Poſſeſſion* falls vaſtly ſhort of the *Promiſe*. But the Pleaſure of *Religion* is ſo far from *deceiving*, that even in *this* World it generally *exceeds* our *Expecta-*

*Expectations: Bleſſed are they that hunger and thirſt after Righteouſneſs, for they ſhall be filled**. Let any Perſon ſincerely pious aſk himſelf the Queſtion, Did he vainly flatter himſelf, when he propoſed great Satisfaction from *Religion?* Does he not actually *find* it? Nay, does it not every Day *grow* and *increaſe* upon him? Or, to put it lower, do not even thoſe, who, upon the whole, cannot be call'd *religious*, though they do *ſome* good Things, plainly perceive the *Bleſſedneſs* of *Religion* even from thoſe *few* good Things which they do? Are they not always *pleaſed* with having done a *virtuous* Action? Did that *Pleaſure* ever once *fail* them? And can they produce one ſingle Inſtance to the *contrary?* Are not the Applauſes of one's *Conſcience* extremely *delightful?* And are there any Delights of the *World* comparable to *this?* It is not commonly indeed ſo *violent* and *rapid*, not ſo *exquiſite* and *intenſe* a Pleaſure, as ſome *others* of a very different Nature may perhaps be; but then it is a more *regular* and *even*, a more *permanent* and *laſting* Complacency,

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* Matth. v. 6.

SERM. XIII. cency, (as will be conſidered in the *next* Particular) and theſe Advantages do infinitely more than make amends for that Defect. Upon the whole therefore we may put the Queſtion like that of the Prophet, *Did ever any Man truſt in the Lord, and was confounded?* Did ever any Man expect entire Satisfaction from *Religion*, and was *diſappointed?* Entire, even in *this* World, as far as the State of Mortality will permit; but abſolutely and perfectly entire in the World *to come*. There, in the *Preſence of God, is Fulneſs of Joy; and at his Right Hand are Pleaſures for evermore* *. Which ſuggeſts the *fourth* and *laſt* Reaſon I mentioned, *viz.*

4. THAT the Advantages of *Religion* are incomparably preferable to thoſe which are *temporal*, becauſe they are infinitely more *durable* in their *Continuance*. The *latter* are only for a *time*, the *former* are *eternal*: They never leave us, neither in this Life, nor in the next; but adhere to us as cloſe as our very Being. Whereas the beſt of *worldly* Enjoyments often forſake *us* before we

* Pſalm xvi. 11.

we forſake the *World*; but however this is always certain, that in a very ſhort Time either they leave *us*, or we leave *them*: From whence it neceſſarily follows, that 'tis a very idle Thing to trouble ourſelves much about them. Setting aſide *Religion*, what Man of *Senſe* would place ſuch a Value upon Things ſo worthleſs? And yet there is ſuch a Noiſe and Struggle about the *World*, as if there were really *ſomething in it*; ſomething, I mean, durable and ſatisfying, and ſufficient to make us happy: For I deny not that a Competency of temporal Things is uſeful and convenient, and to be ſought after with a Care proportion'd to their Value; nor would I in a declamatory Manner extend theſe Reflections beyond the Meaſures of ſtrict Truth and Reaſon. So much of this World is really deſireable, as is requiſite to make our Paſſage to a better eaſy and comfortable: But when we have ſaid this, we have ſaid all: All beyond this is *uſeleſs* and *ſuperfluous*, to ſay no more of it; for I might add *dangerous*, and very often *pernicious*; and therefore to ſeek it, eſpecially with Solicitude, is exquiſitely SERM. XIII.

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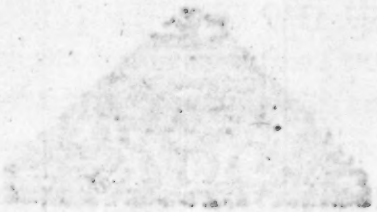
quiſitely fooliſh and irrational. Theſe Reflections, I know, are generally look'd upon as Niceties of Philoſophy, or Strains of Rhetorick; the Subject is regarded as a Common-Place of Declamation, but as merely notional and ſpeculative, impoſſible to be reduced to Practice, and never actually applied to the Affairs of Life. *Niceties* of *Philoſophy?* and *Strains* of *Rhetorick?* What then will Men allow to be plain *Truth* and *Common Senſe*, if *this* be not ſo? Is it a *Nicety*, or a *Strain*, to ſay that a *greater* Good is to be choſen before a *leſs?* And all that I am contending for amounts to no more. 'Tis not that theſe *Notions* are too *fine*, but theſe Men's *Appetites* are too *groſs*; they are beſotted, infatuated, and bewitched with the Illuſions of the World: Otherwiſe this Doctrine would be ſo far from appearing difficult, that the contrary would appear monſtrouſly abſurd and unreaſonable. Nor is it impoſſible, nor any thing like it, to be applied to the Affairs of Life: It is actually practiſed by Many; and, as fooliſh and wicked as the World is, it is not ſo bad as ſome People repreſent

repreſent it. There are Perſons who have a due Contempt for the periſhable Goods of this Life, and *ſeek firſt the Kingdom of God, and his Righteouſneſs:* But then it muſt be own'd there ſeems to be a vaſt Majority on the other Side. Which brings me to the *third* general Head I propoſed to conſider, but which the Time will not allow of till another Opportunity. SERM. XIII.



SERMON XIV.

Of making RELIGION our chief Concern.

The *Second* Sermon on this Subject.

MATTH. VI. 33.

Seek ye firſt the Kingdom of God, and his Righteouſneſs.

HAVING thus, in my *laſt* Diſcourſe on theſe Words, *1ſt*, *explain'd* what is *meant* by *making Religion our chief Concern*, and *rectified* ſome *Miſtakes* about it; and, *2dly*, *proved* the Propoſition laid down, by *comparing* the Things of *this* Life with thoſe of the *next*; I now proceed to the *Third* General Head propoſed. SERM. XIV.

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III. BECAUSE therefore to *diſplay* and *lay open* a Diſtemper is one Step to the *Cure* of it, I ſhall in the *next* Place ſhew, by inſtancing in *Particulars* what has been already hinted at in *general*, that according to all Appearance *Chriſtians* do *not make Religion their chief Concern*, as they *ought* to do.

THIS Propoſition, I fear, will be found to need but little Proof. Great Numbers are ſo far from making *Religion* their *chief* Concern, that they make it *no* Concern *at all*; and even of thoſe who *do* make it *ſome*, the *greater* Number do not make it their *chief*. What Multitudes are there who have given their Names *to* Chriſtianity, and ſcarce ever think *upon* it! or, in other Words, who are *Chriſtians* in *Name*, and in nothing *elſe*! *The Cares of this World, and the Deceitfulneſs of Riches* *, Pleaſure, Honour, and Profit, are either ſeparately or jointly the Tyrants of their Souls; but how ſeldom are thoſe Souls themſelves the Objects of their own Contemplations! The Gratifications of *this Life* are their perpetual Study; but how

* Matth. xiii. 22.

how little *is God in all their Thoughts!* With what Greedineſs do they *purſue* all manner of *ſenſual* Delights! But when is it that they *taſte* or *reliſh* the Pleaſures of *Religion?* The everlaſting Hurry of Buſineſs in the Purſuit of Gain excuſes them, as they ſeem to imagine, from ever once reflecting upon that Expoſtulation of our Saviour, *What is a Man profited, if he ſhould gain the whole World, and loſe his own Soul? And what ſhall a Man give in exchange for his Soul* ?* Many therefore, I ſay, who call themſelves *Chriſtians*, very many, it is to be feared, are utterly regardleſs of *Religion*, and not at all concerned about it. But even of thoſe who do make it *ſome* Buſineſs, how *few*, as I ſaid, make it their *main* Buſineſs? On the contrary, among the Generality of them, is not the Salvation of their Souls the *leaſt* in their Thoughts? Do they not neglect the Service and Worſhip of God upon any frivolous Pretence? To examine the Practice of a yet *better* Rank of Chriſtians, thoſe who are really in a *conſiderable Degree* concern'd for Religion, ſober in their Way of living, and tolerably regular in their Devo-

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* Matth. xvi. 26.

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tion; are not many even of them *Lovers of Pleaſure more than Lovers of God**? Is not too much of their Time ſpent in Company and immoderate Recreations? I ſay *immoderate*; for (as I ſtated it in my laſt Diſcourſe) the Things are *in themſelves* innocent, nay good and commendable, provided they do not intrench upon the Performance of our Duty, and take up too much of our Time. But then I ſay, have not the Perſons I am ſpeaking of an *inordinate* Affection for them? Do they enough *retire within themſelves* in private Meditation, examining the State and Condition of their Souls, repenting of their Sins, praiſing God, contemplating his Nature, and converſing with him by Prayer and Devotion? Are they not more anxious and ſolicitous for *this* Life, than for the *next*? In providing for themſelves and Families *here*, than in ſecuring their everlaſting Intereſt *hereafter*? Many, it is to be hoped, there are, nay there certainly are, who can reply to every one of theſe Interrogatories by the *Anſwer of a good Conſcience*; who *practiſe* according to the Precept of my *Text*, and *really*

* 2 Tim. iii. 4.

really make *Religion* their *chief*, their *greateſt* Concern. But then it is too evident that upon the whole, and taking the World all together, the Character of corrupt Mankind given by the Royal Pſalmiſt is fatally true: *Man walketh in a vain Shadow, and diſquieteth himſelf in vain; he heapeth up Riches, and cannot tell who ſhall gather them.** And, as his wiſe Son elegantly expreſſes it, *All things are full of Labour; Man cannot utter it: The Eye is not ſatisfied with ſeeing, nor the Ear with hearing* †.—*Vanity of Vanities, ſaith the Preacher, Vanity of Vanities; all is Vanity* ‡: i. e. all that this preſent World can afford, which the Generality of Mankind ſo greedily purſue. SERM. XIV.

IV. To *enquire* into the *Reaſons* or *Cauſes* of which is the Buſineſs of the *Fourth* General Head I propoſed to diſcourſe upon. Now of this there is one *general* Reaſon; and ſome *particular* ones may be properly mentioned. The *general* one is the univerſal Corruption of Human Nature by *the Fall of Man* and *Original Sin*: By which (as *our Church* expreſſes it in her *Ninth* Article)

* Pſalm xxxix. 6. † Eccleſ. i. 8. ‡ Ver. 2.

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ticle) *Man is very far gone from original Righteouſneſs, and is of his own Nature inclined to Evil.* By this Infection our *Underſtandings* are darken'd, our *Wills* depraved, our *Paſſions* irregular and rebellious, the *ſuperior* Faculties weaken'd, and the *inferior* ſtrengthen'd. To ſtate the Notion of *Original Sin*, to ſhew how far this Depravation is naturally propagated, in what Senſe it is our *Sin*, (for it is ſo in *ſome* Senſe) and in what our *Misfortune*, how far it is *communicated*, and how far *imputed*, and the like, is not my Buſineſs at this Time to conſider. It will be ſufficient to obſerve at preſent, that *God* cannot be *unjuſt*, how *unaecountable* ſoever theſe Things may appear to *our* narrow Underſtandings. In fact and by Experience we find this miſerable Corruption of our Nature, by which we are moſt ſtrongly inclined to make *wrong Judgments*, to be deluded with *falſe Shews*, to chuſe *Evil* rather than *Good*, to doat upon the *World*, and to neglect *Heaven*, to be led by the *Fleſh* more than by the *Spirit*, and to obey *Paſſion* rather than *Reaſon*. The *Holy Scriptures* are full of Expreſſions of this Nature, repreſenting the deplorable Dege-

Degeneracy of Mankind: *The Imaginations of Man's Thoughts are only evil continually* *. —*There is not a juſt Man upon Earth that doeth Good, and ſinneth not* †.—Even *the juſt Man falleth ſeven times a day* ‡.—*The Heart is deceitful above all things, and deſperately wicked; who can know it* ‖? — *If any Man be in Chriſt, he is a new Creature; old things* muſt be done *away, and every thing* muſt become *new* §.—*God made Man upright, but they have ſought ought many Inventions* **.—*The Fleſh luſteth againſt the Spirit* ††.—*The carnal Mind is Enmity to the Law of God, and is not ſubject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be,* i. e. by its own natural Power, without the Aſſiſtance of Divine Grace; *ſo then they that are in the Fleſh* (i. e. in the natural, corrupt State of Mankind) *cannot pleaſe God* |||.—Now ſhould the Queſtion be aſk'd, why a Man in a *Fever* reaſons *ill*, taſtes and reliſhes *wrong*, craves Things *pernicious*, and refuſes thoſe which are *beneficial*; the Anſwer is ready, *Becauſe* he is in a Fever, by which his Judgment is *weaken'd*, and

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* Gen. vi. 5. † Eccleſ. vii. 20. ‡ Prov. xxiv. 16.
‖ Jerem. xvii. 9. § 2 Cor. v. 17. ** Eccleſ. vii. 29.
†† Gal. v. 17. ||| Rom. viii. 7, 8.

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and his Appetite *vitiated.* And this is exactly *our* Caſe. The original univerſal Corruption of Humanity is a *Diſeaſe*, a Diſtemper entailed upon us, and blended with our Blood and Spirits, with the very Conſtitution of our Souls and Bodies. What the Prophet *Iſaiah* ſays of the People of the *Jews* in *particular*, may be applied to *Mankind* in *general*, conſider'd in its *natural* State without the *Grace* of *God*, and the *Merits* of *Chriſt*. *The whole Head is ſick, and the whole Heart faint: From the Sole of the Foot even unto the Head there is no Soundneſs in it, but Wounds, and Bruiſes, and putrifying Sores; they have not been cloſed, neither bound up, neither mollified with Ointment**. But then we muſt not carry our Reflections upon this melancholy Subject too far: This Diſeaſe is very *curable*, nay there is an infallible Remedy *actually* found out for it; and not only ſo, but it is in every particular Chriſtian's Power to apply it; of which more in its proper Place. This then is the *general, univerſal* Reaſon of our Carnality and Worldly-mindedneſs; of Men's generally not *ſeeking firſt the Kingdom of God, and*

* Iſaiah i. 5, 6.

and his Righteouſneſs. But then ſome *parti-* SERM.
cular Reaſons may be given of it; and it XIV.
will be ſufficient to mention but *two.*

AND the *firſt* is *this:* That we labour under the Misfortune of having our *falſe* and *imaginary* Happineſs preſent and before our Eyes, but our *real* future and at a diſtance. Now Things which are *near* us are always apt to ſtrike more forcibly, and to make deeper Impreſſions, than thoſe which are farther *removed* from us. Were the Joys of Heaven, and the Torments of Hell, as near us as the Pleaſures and Pains of this Life, there certainly would be no ſuch Thing as an irreligious Perſon in the World; but ſince the Caſe is quite otherwiſe, and it requires Labour and Thought to form a right Judgment of Things, this is *one* great Source of the Wickedneſs and Miſery of Mankind.

2. ANOTHER Reaſon of what we are conſidering is *this:* That the Things of the *preſent* Life are *groſs* and *ſenſible*, but thoſe of the *next* are *ſpiritual* and *inviſible.* Now though this is really, and in the Truth of Things, an *Advantage* to Religion, ſince *ſpiritual* Pleaſures are more adapted to the Dignity

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Dignity of our Nature than *ſenſible*; yet in fact, and by the Corruption of our Nature, it is a *Diſadvantage* to it. The Objects of *Senſe* are not only eaſy to be apprehended, but are perpetually thruſting and crowding themſelves upon us; whereas thoſe of *Reaſon* are fine and delicate, and require ſome Intenſeneſs and Abſtraction of Thought, which is not to be attain'd without Labour and Diligence. So that upon the whole, as the Things of Religion have infinitely the Advantage in reſpect of *real Worth*, which has been largely ſhewn under my *Second* general Head; ſo thoſe of this World have the Advantage in reſpect of *Addreſs* and *Inſinuation*: The *former* are infinitely more *valuable*, but the *latter* are more *applicable*: The *former* are more ſuitable to the *Excellence* of our Nature, and therefore more *worthy* to be choſen; the *latter* are more ſuitable to the *Corruption* of our Nature, and ſo more *eaſy* and *likely* to be choſen. And this is the great Misfortune of our lapſed and degenerate State: To cure and remove this is the Buſineſs of *Religion*, and a neceſſary Preparatory to our Happineſs.

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NOR is there any Reaſon why the *Difficulty* of it ſhould fright or diſcourage us: For though it be *hard*, yet it is very *poſſible*. Our Nature is not ſo corrupt, but that ſtill the Principles of Reaſon and Truth remain in it, though greatly impaired by that Corruption. *The Law in our Members is very ſtrong*; but *the Law of our Minds* notwithſtanding continues, and is capable of being made much ſtronger than the other. Our Minds ſtill judge rightly of *Generals*; and though in *Particulars* we often act contrary to that *Judgment*, yet our *Conſciences* never fail to *upbraid* and *condemn* us for ſo doing. Our Appetite for *heavenly Things*, though much *deaden'd*, is far from being *extinguiſhed*; and the Image of God in us, though greatly *ſullied*, is by no means entirely *defaced*. So that the *Foundations* of Goodneſs and Virtue ſtill remain in our Souls; and the whole Fabrick may be completely repaired by our own Endeavours, aſſiſted by the *Grace* of *God*, and render'd effectual by the *Merits* of *Jeſus Chriſt*: Nay it very often actually *is* ſo; nor is it ſo very hard to be perform'd, as ſome are apt

SERM. XIV. apt to repreſent it. In order therefore to effect this bleſſed Change, which, though *difficult*, is very *practicable*, I proceed in the *Fifth* Place,

V. To give ſome *Rules*, by the Obſervation of which we ſhall act upon the Principle here laid down, and *ſeek firſt the Kingdom of God, and his Righteouſneſs*.

1. FIRST then, it is not here requiſite to inſiſt upon, though it is proper to mention, *Prayer*, *Divine Meditation*, *Reading* and *Hearing* the Word of *God*, and the like; not becauſe they are too *inconſiderable*, but becauſe they are too *plain* to be inſiſted upon. So far are they from being *inconſiderable*, that they are of the utmoſt *Importance*, and abſolutely *neceſſary*. And tho' (as I ſaid in my laſt Diſcourſe) they do not involve the *Whole* of Religion, nor is the *greateſt* Part of our Time neceſſarily to be ſpent in ſuch Exerciſes; yet thoſe Perſons who have moſt Leiſure for them have an Advantage over thoſe who have leſs, and are inexcuſable if they do not make uſe of it. To employ *ſome Part* of every Day in

Prayer

Prayer eſpecially, is the Duty of every *Chriſtian*, be his Life never ſo *buſy*; and what is wanting in *Length* ought to be made up in the *Earneſtneſs* and *Fervency* of our Petitions, that God would be pleaſed to grant us his all-ſufficient Grace to conquer the Corruptions of our Nature, to give us *a right Judgment in all Things*, that we may *ſet our Affections on Things above, not on Things on the Earth* *. SERM. XIV.

2. In order to have *our Converſation in Heaven*, and to make *Religion* our *greateſt Concern*, it is neceſſary to habituate ourſelves to *Thinking* and *Reflection*, to exerciſe the *ſuperior* Faculties of our Souls, *Reaſon*, *Judgment*, and *Underſtanding*; that the *inferior*, *Paſſion*, *Fancy*, and *Appetite*, may be curb'd and reſtrain'd within due Bounds. *Divine Meditation* I mentioned under the *former* Particular; but *this* is diſtinct from *that*, as including much *more*. *That* implies only *devotional Contemplation* in *Privacy* and *Retirement*: But *here* I ſpeak of a thoughtful and rational Habit of Mind in *general*; which may be obtained even by thoſe who have

* Col. iii. 2.

SERM. XIV. have the leaſt Leiſure for *Retirement*, and are moſt deeply involved in the Affairs and Buſineſs of the *World*. For inſtance: Cannot a Man, though never ſo buſy, conſider every Day, nay almoſt every Hour of his Life, that his Soul is *immortal*, and that all Things *here* are utterly worthleſs, in compariſon of thoſe we expect *hereafter*? It is not eaſily to be imagined of how great Uſe this will be to us: The grand Inconvenience above-mentioned, ariſing from the Compariſon between *ſpiritual* and *ſenſible* Things, will in time be removed; *ſpiritual* Things will be every Day more and more *delightful*, and *ſenſible* more and more *contemptible*: Eſpecially if, in the third Place,

3. We habituate our Minds to anſwer the *Fallacy* impoſed upon us in the Compariſon between Things *preſent* and *future*; which, as I ſaid, is the greateſt Diſadvantage and Misfortune we labour under. This Inconvenience would be remedied, if we would accuſtom ourſelves to dilate our Thoughts, and ſtretch them beyond the narrow Bounds of *Matter*, conſidering that our Souls are *immortal*, and will have a Being

ing to all *Eternity*; and conſequently that it infinitely more concerns us to provide for their Welfare in *that* State, than to take care for the Gratification of them in *this*, which of neceſſity muſt terminate in ſo *ſhort* a Time. We muſt conſider, that whatſoever is really and certainly *future* will ſome time or other be *preſent*; and we have then a true Notion of *Futurity*, when we conceive a Thing which is not *yet*, but will moſt aſſuredly *come to paſs*. It ſeems then there is not ſo much Difference between *preſent* and *future*, as is commonly imagined, ſince *both* are equally *certain*. Thoſe therefore who acknowledge the different Portions of Woe and Bliſs in another World to be Things *future*, act irrationally if they do not act as if they were *preſent*; unleſs they can prove that the Happineſs of *this* Life more than balances that of the *next*. If they can make out *that*, they will indeed ſay ſomething; but the Conſideration of the *Futurity* of the Bleſſings promiſed us is ſo far from being an Argument *againſt* them, that rightly underſtood, and taking in all, it is an Argument *for* them.

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SERM. XIV. them. By *Thinking* we may in effect *make* Things *future* to be *preſent*: Elſe, to what Purpoſe were the Faculties of *Reaſoning* given us? For the *Brutes* can perceive many Things actually *preſent*, as well as *We*. But the *Soul of Man*, by the boundleſs Range of *Thinking*, (which by the way is at leaſt a probable Argument, as there are many others more than probable, of its boundleſs Duration) can join the *paſt* and *future* to the *preſent*.

——*Vivida vis animi pervincit, & ultra*
Procedit longe flammantia mœnia mundi:

If we may be allow'd to quote the Words of an *Atheiſt* *, which are almoſt a *Diſproof* of *Atheiſm*. I call him by that Name, becauſe though in a *ſpeculative* way he *acknowledges* a Divine Power, in a *practical* one he *denies* it. If the Things of the next Life are *future*, they are *eternal* too; and 'tis wonderful that the Conſideration of the *latter* does not infinitely more than balance the Conſideration of the *former*.

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* LUCRET. Lib. I.

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I PROCEED now to my *Sixth* and *Laſt* General Head, in which I propoſed,

VI. To conſider the *happy Effects* and *Conſequences* of thus *ſeeking firſt the Kingdom of God and his Righteouſneſs*, even in this *preſent* Life. I ſay in this *preſent* Life, becauſe with regard to the *next* there can be no Difficulty or Diſpute; it is ſo plain, that it admits of no Diſquiſition. And even here I ſhall not be long, the Matter being very evident; nor diſtribute Things into *diſtinct* Particulars, but *briefly* and *promiſcuouſly* conſider them as they happen to fall in our way.

BY making *Religion* the *main* Buſineſs of our Lives, we prevent the Uneaſineſs of Solicitude, of Loſſes and Diſappointments in the Affairs of the World: And, how little ſoever it may be regarded, nothing is more certain than that, ſuppoſing a prudent Care and Conduct, thoſe *enjoy* the World *moſt* who are *concerned* for it *leaſt*. But, which is far more conſiderable, without this it is impoſſible we ſhould be *truly* religious, and

SERM. XIV. with it 'tis impoſſible we ſhould be *otherwiſe*. This Principle being once fix'd and eſtabliſh'd in us, our Minds will be ſupple and pliant to all the Motions of Virtue and God's Grace: *Religion* will be the very Conſtitution of our Souls: The *inferior* Faculties will upon all Occaſions immediately ſtoop and bend to the *ſuperior*, and our Duty will in all its Parts be eaſy and pleaſant. But, on the contrary, how can we be in a Condition fit for *Heaven*, unleſs our *Affections* are *heavenly*? How ſhall we find ourſelves when we come to *die*, if we are in a Habit of *carnal* or *worldly* Affections? We ſhall not then be able to turn the Bent of our Souls, or alter the Cuſtoms of Vice, which are *rooted* in our Conſtitutions, like old *Oaks* in the Ground, *fix'd* and *immoveable*: Our *Appetites* will be *ſtiff*, *unwieldy*, and *inflexible* to every thing that is *good*; and in ſuch a Caſe, *Miſerable Men that we are, who indeed ſhall deliver us from that Body of Death* *? To *conclude* therefore:

THIS

* Rom. vii. 24.

THIS Subject can never be too frequently *revolved*, never too thoroughly *digeſted* in our Thoughts. This indeed is the *Sum* and *Subſtance* of *Religion*; to live a Life of *Reaſon!* For *Religion* is *Reaſon rectified* and *reformed.* Let us all then fix theſe Things in our Hearts; that we may conceive the greateſt Comfort and Joy in repeating thoſe Words of the bleſſed Apoſtle: *For we know that when our earthly Houſe of this Tabernacle is diſſolved, we have a Building of God, an Houſe not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens* *: Remembring that *we have here no continuing City, but ſeek one to come* †: Being thus ſuperior to both Fortunes in this lower World, *While we look not unto the Things which are ſeen, but unto the Things which are not ſeen; for the Things which are ſeen are temporal, but the Things which are not ſeen are eternal* ‡. That our Affections may be ſo indifferent to the *former*, as not to hinder us from the final Enjoyment of the *latter*, God of his infinite SERM. XIV.

* 2 Cor. v. 1. † Heb. xiii. 14.

‡ 2 Cor. iv. 18.

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nite Mercy grant, through *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord:

To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Honour and Glory, Adoration and Praiſe, Might, Majeſty, and Dominion, henceforth and for evermore. *Amen.*

The END *of the* FIRST VOLUME.

MVSEVM BRITAN NICVM